Christian Liberty, &c.

or

AN Explanation of *Act.* 15. 20, 29. And the maine Question therein discussed is, *Whether Christians under the Gospell ought to eat things strangled and blood*;(seeing the same are in that Text seemingly prohibited to these first Christians at Antioch,) wherein is proved, that *All Meats are Lawfull*, and may by all be freely eaten without restraint, or exception of any.

By

W: ROE

Lew Rees Englesh - N.W. Edwards - April 1979

X 248
R62e

Τὸ Προοιμιον.

Leading to the matter in hand, and declaring the Method or Order of proceeding, observed in the ſubſequent Diſcourſe in Refutation of this Errour.

ERrour, and Schiſme have ever been the Companions of all Ages: and therefore the Apoſtle S. *Paul* hath long agoe given out a Watch-word, to beware of the fomenters of the ſame. *Rom.* 16. 17. Now I beſeech you Brethren, marke them which cauſe diviſions, & offences, contrary to the doctrine, which ye have learned, & avoide them.

Yea ſo hainous is this practice, that it is a Queſtion with *Aquinas* 2ª 2ª *qu.* 39. *Utrum Schiſma gravius peccatum ſit, quam Infidelitas*: Whether Schiſme be not a more grievous Sin than unbeliefe. *Quia peccatum Schiſmatis gravius invenitur punitum, quam peccatum Infidelitatis, & Idololatriæ*. Becauſe the ſin of Schiſme hath been found to be more grievously puniſhed, than the ſin of unbeliefe and Idolatry

latry, the Jewes Idolatry in making the molten Calfe being punished but by the Sword, *Exod.* 32. 28. When *Korah Dathan* & *Abiram* for rebelling against *Moses* & *Aaron* were *subito telluris hiatu* swallowed up quicke: *Numb.* 16. 32. A Judgement no lesse formidable than admirable, and a timely Caveat to such as at this day breed divisions in our Church. Moreover no lesse remarkable was the Judgement that befell *Nadab* & *Abihu*, who for offering strange fire before the Lord received as strange a punishment, being devoured with fire from the Lord for that offence: *Et scelus hoc meriti pondus & instar habet.*

And what strange fire is now a dayes offered: what strange worship have some devised? who in the cleare light of the Gospell dreame of worshipping God by observing a superstitious abstinence from meates, as if there were any thing therein to commend us to God: when the weakest Christians are not ignorant, that God is a Spirit, & they that worship him, must worship him in Spirit, and in truth. *Joh.* 4. 24.

But it is a common Adage that where God hath his Church, there the Devill indeavoureth to have his Chappell. For as in the time of *Luther* no sooner could the splendour of a Reformation begin to peepe out of that palpable darkenesse of Popery and Superstition, but

Satan

Satan ſtirres up miſts of Errour to eclipſe the light thereof: raiſing up one *Storke Muncer*, & others of a giddy and unſound Judgement, who not onely denyed Infant-Baptiſme, which had not bin openly oppoſed from the Apoſtles times till then: but alſo (as no errour is ever without concomitants) pretended to inſpirations, and Enthuſiaſmes, rebelled againſt Magiſtracy, maintained polygamy, denyed that Chriſt received fleſh and bloud from the Virgin *Mary*, with many other erroneous foppereries: All whoſe indeavours notwithſtanding were ſuddenly blaſted; confuſion proving the Iſſue of their raſh attempts: So that as thoſe ſtrange puniſhments befell *Korah*, *Nadab*, and the reſt before mentioned, who of old indeavoured to ſow the ſeeds of diviſion, Schiſme, or rebellion amongſt Gods people; even ſo fell it out with theſe Schiſmaticall factions in the dayes of *Luther* in *Germany*, and other places, ſome of them being ſlaine, others hanged, others drowned, others ſuffering other ſtrange deaths, till all of them at laſt were utterly conſumed and deſtroyed.

Even ſo in like manner we ſee at this day, and in this Nation, that no ſooner can there be any thing ſaid, or done in reference to a Reformation, but upſtarts a freſh, this Sect amongſt us, denying Baptiſme even to the Infants of Believers, and not onely ſo, but alſo

embraceing the Pelagian Hereſy touching Originall ſinne, Arminianiſme touching Election, Univerſall Grace, Free will &c. But amongſt the reſt beginning to enter upon a Popiſh Superſtition or Jewiſh ceremony touching a diſtinction of Meats, as if ſome kindes of meats were unlawfull to be eaten. And to this end they practiſe an utter refuſall of eating ſuch of the Creatures, as are killed by ſtrangling, or meats in whoſe confection, or confertion blood is uſed (the particulars being ſo well known, I need not mention them) and therefore they ſuffer nothing which they eate to die by ſuffocation, but make effuſion of the blood upon the ground, becauſe they will not eat thereof, leaſt God thereby ſhould be offended, as they pretend, thus as thoſe in Germany, that came at laſt to ruine, ſo are theſe in England carryed away with the like vaine deluſions. What the Diſpenſations of Providence will be to ſuch at laſt, none can determine, But Τυφομένε μελάθρε τῆ πλησίον, ϗ τὸ σὸν κινδυνεύει. *Felix quem faciunt* ---- is no bad caution. But to proceed: This their opinion they ground upon a groſs miſapprehenſion or miſconſtruction of certain Texts in *Act.* 15. 20. 29.

Tunc tua res agitur paries cum proximus Ardet.

Wherefore that we may at leaſt endeavour to

cruſh this Neſt-gull of theſe Cockatrice opinions in the ſhell, that it grow no greater, or ſpread no farther to Infeſt or Infect peoples (at firſt perhaps) doubtfull or unſetled mindes, with its virulent Contagion, I have thought good to preſent this Antidote, or Cordiall, to prevent the ſame, or at leaſt to ſtay their ſtomacks, if not to give ſome longing Appetites after Novelties full Satisfaction.

The Scripture is rightly compared to a Ford, thorow which a Lambe may wade, and in which an Elephant may plunge. Now for ſo much knowledge as is neceſſary for Salvation it hath pleaſed the Lord to lay a Ford therein ſo plain, and a paſſage ſo obvious to the underſtanding, that the meaneſt capacity may eaſily wade through it, and by Gods aſſiſting grace and their own care, and vigilancy may ſafely arive at the deſired *H*aven of happineſs and bliſs: but if thorow their too much nicity, men will diſlike this known Channell, and beaten path, and would needs ſeek out amongſt Rocks ſome neerer way to Heaven, they may like unskilfull Pilots ſoon ſplit themſelves and judgements upon a thouſand Scylla's of difficulty, and Syrtes of undiſcerned danger, wherein the further they wade the deeper they ſinke, till they plunge themſelves over head, and eares in perplexing thoughts, and ambiguous Tenets, and at laſt

without a ſeaſonable heed, and timely returne drowne themſelves in Errour, and perdition, before they get halfe way to the end of their intended voyage.

Now as thoſe Mariners, or Pilots, cannot eſcape Rockes, and Shipwracke, who ſaile at randome, and guide their ſterne onely by the uncertain gueſs of their own judgement, without either ſtarre or compaſs to direct them: even ſo in like manner muſt they needs ſplit themſelves upon rocks of errour, and cannot chooſe but make ſhipwrack of the Truth, who ſailing in the vaſt Ocean of the Scripture, muſt needs plunge into the deep Gulfes of miſterious difficulties, and yet carry with them neither line nor Plumbet of orthodox Expoſitors to ſound the bottome of the ſame, nor have any way to ſteere by, but to fall upon each rock, and ſhelfe as they find it, no Rule to avoid the danger of Error, but by taking Scriptures, as they lye (as in this 15. of *Act.* appeareth plaine) no way to reſolve ambiguous, or enigmaticall points, or places, but the ſhadowy Hypotheſis of their own floating fancies, how is it poſſible that ſuch ſhould ſaile ſafely and not ſinke into Errours and Hereſies, or Judge and find out the ſenſe of diſſonant Texts rightly and truly, that obſerve no better Rules to help them; or have no better Guides to direct their Judgement in paſsing thorow

thorow ſuch dark and difficult places in the Word of God?

If the Apoſtle S. *Peter* who was doubtleſſe inſpired by the Holy Ghoſt in abundant meaſure, yet acknowledgeth ſome things in Saint *Pauls* Epiſtles hard to be underſtood, which they that are unlearned and unſtable wreſt, as they doe alſo other Scriptures unto their own deſtruction 2 *Pet.* 3. 16. what ſhall we think of ſuch in theſe dayes, who although they be neither learned themſelves, nor will conſult with ſuch Ancient, or Moderne Writers, and Expoſitors, as are learned, and have been long Students in the Scriptures, diſſecting or Anatomizing and ſetting forth the very Skeleton of each Text and place: yea will take upon them by their own naturall Ability, or by a pretended Inſpiration to put Gloſſes upon the Word of God, to raiſe ſenſes from, and make expoſitions, and Interpretaions of the ſame. Are not theſe thoſe unlearned, and unſtable perſons, whom S. *Peter* ſpeaks of, that wreſt the Scriptures &c? But let all ſuch, as deſire to live free from being entangled with errour, liſten unto the Apoſtles exhortation in the next verſe: *Ye therefore Beloved, ſeeing ye know theſe things before, beware, leaſt yee alſo being lead away with the Errours of the wicked, fall from your own ſtedfaſtneſſe*, v. 17. *But grow in Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord*

Lord and Saviovr Jeſus Chriſt: to him be glory both now and for ever: Amen. v. 18. Here is the main buſineſs of a Chriſtian: *viz.* to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Chriſt, not to perplex themſelves with difficult points, and fruitleſſe diſputations, the former is the path, that is ſo plain in *Scripture*, that the meaneſt capacitys by Gods bleſſing, and aſsiſting grace may underſtand, and ſafely paſſe through the ſame, when to chooſe rather to climbe over rocks, and clifts muſt needs be no leſſe dangerous, than needleſſe, eſpecially for unlearned Chriſtians.

But if we will not be perſwaded, but will needs be tampering with controverſies and ambiguous Texts, let us be ſure to obſerve ſome rules or directions, how to proceed therein, and to deale therewith; that we may, as much as poſsible may be, avoid Errour: to which end, *viz.* that ſuch may take ſome Guide along with them, to direct them in their way, who will needs runn upon the Rockes of Scripture, and intermeddle with polemicall diſcourſes from the Word of God; although it were ſeaſonable in this place to give ſome brief directions to that purpoſe; yet that I may not *ab opere inſtituto diutius morari*, I ſhall at preſent deferre the ſame, and ſhall in a ſelect chapter by it ſelfe in the enſuing diſcourſe give certaine Cautions as a

Cynoſure

Cynosure not unnecessary to such to steere their course by through those rocks of difficulty to the right understanding of the Word of God. And in the rest of the same Treatise I shall by Gods Assistance shew: first what is not the true sence of those Texts in hand, and that it is lawfull to eat of all sorts of meats whatsoever: and next what is the true proper, and genuine sense thereof, and in what respect it was not convenient for those primitive Christians to eat of those meats, and then answering certaine objections raised to cleare the point shall conclude.

Concerning

Concerning the true Senſe of Act. 15. 29.

Verſe.

28. Ἔδοξε γὰρ τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι καὶ ἡμῖν μηδὲν πλέον ἐπιτίθεσθαι ὑμῖν βάρος, πλὴν τῶν ἐπάναγκες τούτων·

29. Ἀπέχεσθαι εἰδωλοθύτων καὶ αἵματος καὶ πνικτοῦ καὶ πορνείας· ἐξ ὧν διατηροῦντες ἑαυτοὺς, εὖ πράξετε.

28. *Viſum eſt enim Spiritui Sancto, ac nobis, ne quod amplius imponeremus vobis onus præter neceſſaria iſta.*

29. *Videlicet, ut abſtineatis ab iis, quæ ſunt immolata Simulacris, & Sanguine, & ſuffocato & Scortatione: a quibus ſi vobis caveritis, bene agetis.*

28. For it ſeemed good to the Holy Ghoſt, and to us to lay upon you no greater burthen than theſe neceſſary things;

29. That yee abſtain from meats offered to Idols, and from blood, and from things ſtrangled, and from fornication: from which if yee keep your ſelves yee ſhall do well.

CHAP.

CHAP. I.

Wherein is proved, that all Meats are lawfull by ſeverall Texts of Scripture: whereby it appeareth that that cannot be the true ſenſe of Act. 15. 29. which is by ſome in theſe dayes put upon the place.

THAT we may with the greater perſpicuity underſtand, and the more regularity diſcuſſe the point in hand, it ſeemeth in the firſt place requiſite to ſtate the Queſtion aright, which for the cleerer diſcerning of our diſcrepancy in Opinion, ſtands thus

Whether, All Chriſtians under the Goſpel are from that Text prohibited to eat of meats offered to Idols, and of Blood, and of things ſtrangled.

There be ſome in theſe dayes ſeem to affirm it, others deny it. And therefore our Aſſertion is, That to expound thoſe Texts in reference to theſe meats, as binding precepts to all Chriſtians under the Goſpell is a groſs miſinterpretation thereof, and this I ſhall endeavour by Gods aſsiſtance to make good, firſt from ſeverall Scriptures, ſecondly from certaine reaſons grounded upon the Word of God.

Firſt that all Chriſtians under the Goſpell are

are thereby commanded to abstaine from meats offered to Idols, things strangled, and blood, is not the true and genuine sence of *Act.* 15. 20. 29. verses, but that it is lawfull for Christians, for any thing in those meats themselves freely, and warrantably to eat thereof, plainely appeareth from severall Texts of Scripture, directly contradicting that sence which these opinionists would fasten upon those places, and holding forth the lawfulnes of eating all meats whatsoever orderly and moderately taken.

The first Text, that I produce for confirmation of what is before delivered, is 1 *Tim. ch.* 4. *v.*4. *For every Creature of God is Good and nothing to be refused*, If it be received with thanksgiving.

Here we see apparently that all Gods creatures without any exception for matter of Conscience may in themselves lawfully be eaten & that nothing in it selfe for any pious respect ought to be refused.

And to this agreeth Judicious *Calvin* upon the place, where he saith: *Uno verbo significat Paulus, non esse immunda nobis coram Deo vel polluta quæcunque ex Dei manu proveniant, & nobis in usum destinantur, quin illis vesci quoad Conscientiam liceat.*

And if we compare this verse with verse 3 imme-

mmediatly going before this, and with the verſe of this chap. we ſhall not onely find he Apoſtle declaring ſuch to be but as Apoates from the faith, giving heed to ſeducing pirites and doctrines of Divells v.1. who comnands to abſtaine from meats, which God ath Created to be received with thankſiving of them which believe and know the ruth verſe 3. but alſo we evidently ſee, that one which know the truth: that is, none ut ſuch as are weake in faith, or Novices in eligion will offer to ſcruple at ſuch things, s theſe (as in the cloſe will more appeare.)

Neither can any object, that the Apoſtles proof of ſuch as v. 3. commanded to abtaine from meats was at all, limited to, or reſtrained by the words followiug in the ſame verſe, *viz. which God hath created to be receiued*, as if things ſtrangled, and Blood, or any meats were there excluded, as not created of God to be received. For he that runnes may read and eaſily diſcerne that the word βρώματα here uſed in reſpect of Gods ordaining of meates is indefinitely there ſpoken, ſhewing that all meats whatſoever are created to be received: For otherwiſe the Apoſtle would not have ſaid ἀπέχεσθαι βρωμάτων ἃ &c. but ἀπέχεσθαι τοίων βρωμάτων ἅ, or, ὅτα ὁ Θεὸς ἔκτισεν εἰς μετάλημψιν &c. but there is no reſtrictive

particle

particle at all there uſed, nor any diſtinctio
or exception at all made.

But the Apoſtle preventeth any ſuch Obje
ction in the very next words following be
fore repeated: plainly ſhewing, that Go
hath created all meats whatſoever to be re
ceived; firſt affirmatively, *For every creature o
God* (ſaith he) *is Good*: and then negatively
and nothing to be refuſed, οὐδὲν ἀπόβλητον or no
thing to be caſt away, as the word proper
ſignifieth, that is no Creature, or nothing o
the Creature, *Quoad Conſcientiam* to be re
jected or caſt away directly reproving, o
contradicting their practiſe, that caſt awa
the blood of the Creatures.

Object. But here before this Treatiſe coul
reach the Preſs, I have accidentally met wit
an objection, and ſuch an one indeed, as I di
not Imagine, could have proceeded from an
rationall judgement: and it is this: Th
blood is not a Creature, but the life of th
Creature. To which I anſwere.

Anſ. 1. A pretty fallacy, but whether
proceeding out of policie, or ſimplicity,
ſhall not queſtion. But if we ſhould be ſo ſim
ple or illiterate, as to grant Blood not to be
Creature: yet it will not I hope be denye
that things ſtrangled are creatures and ſo a
good and not to be refuſed.

2. But the Text ſaith, no Thing is to b
refu

refuſed, but Blood is a thing: and therefore is not to be refuſed. But the truth is Blood is not to be refuſed, not onely as it is a thing, but as it is a Creature.

3. For if blood be not a Creature, what is it? the Creator? There are but two things in the whole Univerſe, the Creatour and the creature, and there is nothing in the whole Univerſe but muſt be one of theſe two: If it be not a Creature it muſt of neceſſity be the Creatour, but blood is not the Creatour; therefore it is a Creature.

4. But in cleering this matter, I ſhall not onely anſwer this objection, ſhewing how blood is a creature, and how the life of the creature: but alſo ſhall by the way overthrow another opinion of the Anabaptiſts, Quakers &c. who hold, That humane Learning is needleſſe; which in this very particular will be diſproved: In regard without humane Learning there can be no cleer diſcovery, or right underſtanding, what is meant by the word Creature in this place.

The Word Creature is taken in a twofold reſpect, and according thereunto there are two words of a different ſence that ſignifie a Creature: the one is Animal or τὸ ζῶον ζάω *vivo*, and therefore ſignifieth a Creature, that hath life ſuch as men, beaſts, fowles, or fiſhes: and in this reſpect it is that blood is

is ſaid to be the life of the creature: when in deed blood is not the life of the creature literally taken.

1. Becauſe it would then follow, that ſo long as the blood remaineth in the Body Creature ſhould be alive, or ſhould not die till the blood be effuſed or gone, which is ne ſoe; for we ſee that a man is dead, or his li gone although his blood remaine; and there fore the blood cannot be the life.

2. Becauſe as Philoſophy teacheth) *Form dat vitam*; All life proceedeth from th forme: but blood proceedeth not from th forme: *Ergo* no blood is the life.

But it is in a Tropicall ſence, that blood ſaid *Lev.* 17. and *Gen.* 9. to be the life of th Creature, *viz.* by a metonymie of the Subje for the Adjunct: where *Continens ponit pro re contenta:* as we ſay England is a ſinful or a valiant Nation, meaning the people England: or when we ſay I drinke a Glaſſe you for the Beer or Wine contained in th Glaſſe. And thus is Blood called the life of th Creature μετωνυμικῶς, becauſe it containet the life.

Where by the way we ſee, that withou Humane learning or the knowledge of a Rhe toricall Trope, we cannot ſo much as under ſtand, how blood is ſaid to be the life of th Creature: but to proceed;

Th

The other word which ſignifieth a Creature, is *Creatura* of *creo* or τὸ κτίσμα of κτίζω *Condo* or *Creo*, and ſo every thing which is made or created is a creature, but Blood is a thing created or made, therefore it is a Creature.

Now how ſhall we know, whether word or whither ſignification is meant in this Text:, whether is meant every living creature, or every created thing is good, why the ſureſt and indeed an infallible way to know and diſcover this, will be to have recourſe to the Originall, upon which we can no ſooner caſt an eye but we find it πᾶν κτίσμα θεοῦ καλὸν every thing created of God, and to cleer it fully *Beza* in his Latine Tranſlation renders it *Quicquid condidit Deus bonum eſt:* Whatſoever God hath made is good: But God hath made the Blood as well as the fleſh or any other part of the Creature; therefore the Blood is good, and not to be refuſed.

And here againe by the way we ſee that without humane learning or the knowledge of the Latine or Greek tongue we cannot underſtand what creature, or wither word or ſignification is by the Apoſtle here intended: and therefore humane learning is not needleſs (as ſome ſtick not to affirme) but in ſuch cases very neceſſary to diſcerne or find out the true ſence or ſignification of each word, or

Scripture in our Engliſh Tranſlation through out the Word of God.

To object threfore or argue that Blood is not a Creature, becauſe the word Creature is ſometimes uſed for a living Creature, is a plain equivocation or *Fallacia Homonymiæ* in the word Creature, when either through ſubtilty or ſimplicity a word that ſignifieth ſeverall things, is uſed in the wrong ſence or ſignification to deceive others and pervert the Truth which ſophiſtry cannot well be diſcerned, but but by ſo much knowledge in Logick, as to diſcerne a fallacy: ſo that by this time I hope this Objection that blood is not a Creature is not onely cleerly auſwered, and evidently declared, how it is a Creature, and how the life of the Creature; but alſo that the ſame cannot well be done without the help of Humane Learning *viz.* Rhetorick, Logicke and the knowledge of the Tongues: and therefore Humane learning is not needleſs, but moſt neceſſary for the right underſtanding of the Scripture, but to proceed.

Object. It is yet further objected: that if Blood be a Creature, yet we ſee that it is not good either to be eaten, or taſted: for who, if Blood be ſet before him, will account the ſame good either to eat or ſo much as taſte therefore it is to be refuſed.

Anſ. This Objection for ſolidity is much like

the former. But who is ſo ſtupid or ignorant as not to know, that to be eaten or taſted blood is not good, but if it ſhould be ſet before him it ſelf, it is to be refuſed without prohibition from Scripture? and who and who againe is ſo ſottiſh as not to diſcerne, that it is not in this reſpect that the Apoſtle ſpeaketh but the queſtion or matter which the Apoſtle goes about here to reſolve is not whether the creatures of God be good for taſt: for then it would follow that ſticks and ſtones ſhould by the Apoſtles Argument be good to eate, which was never intended: But the queſtion here is whether they be good in point of Conſcience, and not to be refuſed for matter of pollution, which the Apoſtle here in this place clearly reſolveth (*viz.*) *that they are good and not to be refuſed.*

And therefore to argue that becauſe ſome Creatures are not good to the externall ſenſes ſome waies, therefore they are not good or lawfull to be eaten or uſed for matter of conſcience, or in point of religion can no way follow but is a fallacy *A dicto ſecundum quid ad dictum ſimpliciter.*

Wherefore to prevent any ſuch frivolous Cavills as theſe concernig theGoodneſs of the Creatures there mentioned, (*viz.*) what goodneſſe is here meant, end intended *Calvin* ſheweth in what reſpect the Apoſtle meaneth

that every Creature is good: *Bonitas Creaturarum* (ſaith he) *cujus meminit* (*Apoſtolus*) *relationem habet ad homines, & eam quidem non ad corpus aut valetudinem ſed ad Conſcientias; nequis ſcrupuloſe extra loci circumſtantiam Philoſophetur.* The Goodneſs of the Creatures; which the Apoſtle mentioneth, is not meant in reference to their body, or health, but in reference to their Conſciences leaſt any ſhould nicely, or perverſely reaſon, or Cavil beyond the ſcope of the place.

Seeing therefore that this Text doth ſoe cleerly and directly oppugne and contradict that ſence, in which theſe that oppoſe the ſame take that place in *Act.*15. It muſt needs appeare, that that cannot be the true ſence or ſcope, as they take it; but ſomething elſe muſt by help of the Word of God (and ſhall (God wiling) afterward) be found out to be the ſence thereof, and not a generall Command to abſtaine from theſe meats.

For if for matter of Conſcience every thing without exception, or without refuſall, or caſting away of any thing that is good, and may lawfully be eaten, then doubtleſs ſuch things ſtrangled, and meats made of blood may.

But the Antecedent is true out of the Text; as hath been now declared: Therefore the Conſequent.

The

The ſecond Text which we produce, as oppoſing this ſence is 1 *Cor.* 6. 12. *All things are lawfull for me but all things are not expedient: All things are lawfull for me, but I wil not be brought under the power of any* v. 13. *Meats for the Belly and the belly for meats, Veſci ſane, licet quibuslibet ſed moderate, in hoc quidem eſt libertas ſaith Bullinger*) It is lawfull for a man freely to eat, whatſoever he liſteth but moderately: for herein verily he hath liberty.

Auguſt. in lib. Queſt. Evang.

Now if all things are lawfull, as well meats for the belly, as the belly for meats, as the Apoſtle here affirmeth, how can ſuch meats as are made of things ſtrangled, or ſnch meats as are confected of the blood of the creatures, be unlawfull? how can we *ſana conſcientia*, contradict the Apoſtle ſaying or holding any thing unlawfull in it ſelfe, when he affirmeth all things lawfull? therefore the Text in hand muſt needs be abuſed by ſuch as will needs take it that ſence, wherein it is not poſsible for theſe two Scriptures ſo farre diſſonant from one another, fairely and fully to be reconciled.

The third Portion of *Scripture* which cleereth the place in hand from this ſence and interpetation is Rom. 14. 14. *I know and am perſwaded by the Lord Jeſus that there is nothing uncleane of it ſelfe*, and v. 20. πάντα μὲν καθαρὰ

καθαρὰ — *All things indeed are pure, but it is evill for that man that eateth with offence.*

Now if all things are pure, and nothing in it ſelfe uncleane, as we ſee here declared, if we will believe the Apoſtle, and as indeed there is no ſence or reaſon to the contrary under the Goſpell, as will anon appear, how erroneous, or Ignorant muſt all ſuch be in this Judgements, who notwithſtanding this Aſſertion of the Apoſtle do directly contradict the ſame holding an impurity in ſuch meats? And this *Calvin* affirmeth upon the place: *Apoſtolus* (ſaith he) *pronunciat rectæ ac puræ Conſcientiæ nullum Cibum eſſe impurum, neque ullum Impedimentum eſſe quo minus pure utamur, niſi ab Ignorantia & errore.* The Apoſtle pronounceth that to a right and pure Conſcience no meat is impure neither is there any Impediment, why we ſhould not purely uſe the ſame, but from Ignorance and errour. And therefore the Text in hand cannot be any binding Precept to all Chriſtians to abſtaine from thoſe meats: but ſomething elſe muſt be the true ſence and meaning of the place, which theſe Opinioniſts either through ignorance do or willfullneſs will not underſtand.

And thus much might any rationall judgement be well ſatisfied to be ſufficient for the Vindication of theſe Texts in *Act.* 15. from that Miſconſtruction, which theſe Haimap-eſthites

ap-eſthites have unadviſedly made thereof: however what hath been already ſpoken if there were no more, may I hope ſuffice to put a ſtop unto overhaſty or unſetled judgements for being raſhly carryed away into, or inconſiderately embraceing this ſo erroneous a practiſe and opinion, and will I hope at preſent ſtay the ſtomachs eſpecially of all Impartiall Readers, till their full peruſall of what remaines ſhall give them full & ſufficient ſatisfaction, which I hope even they themſelves, that have hitherto diſſented from us in this point, will thereby at laſt abundantly receive.

CHAP. II.

Wherein ſome of thoſe very particular meats in Act. 15. prohibited, are proved Lawfull to be eaten by ſeverall other Scriptures.

THus farre in generall: But that we may yet in ſome particulars come ſomewhat nearer unto the Text in hand:

Although there hath been ſufficient already ſaid in Juſtification of the Lawfulneſs of eating all meats whatſoever, and therefore of thoſe meats, that are the Subject of this

diſcourſe: yet leaſt we ſhould meet with ſome as incredulous as *Thomas*, that have ſo ſmall or at leaſt ſo nice, or ſo curious an eye of judgement that either they cannot or elſe will not vouchſafe to look upon, nor be ſatisfied with what hath hitherto been ſaid, unleſſe they may ſee liberty granted from other Scriptures to eate ſome of thoſe particular meats forbidden in that place, we ſhall therefore try whether we can herein give them ſatisfaction.

And indeed ſeeing that command of the Apoſtles in the place in hand ſtandeth in as full and equall force againſt meats offered to idols, as it doth againſt things ſtrangled and blood: If therefore we find free liberty granted from the Word of God to eat meats offered to Idols, there is no rationall Judgement ſure, unleſſe it be *tribus Anticeris Caput Inſanabile*, that can or will runne ſo farre Byaſse, but muſt needs acknowledge it as lawfull to eate things ſtrangled and blood, as we can finde it lawfull to eate meats offered unto Idols by the word of God, and all one, in regard, I ſay, that the command is all one againſt the one, as againſt the other.

The forth Text therefore of Scripture to this end, and which moſt cleerly vindicateth this of *Act.* 15. 20. 29. from any ſuch ſence,

or

or interpretation, manifeſtly declaring, that place to be no univerſall binding precept to all Chriſtians or in ſucceeding ages to abſtaine from meats offered to Idols, and ſo of the reſt is 1 *Cor.* 8. *ch.* where we ſhall ſee liberty to eat even of meats offered to Idolls which in Acts the 15. are prohibited, in this chapter taken for Granted by the Apoſtle if we do but compare the 4, 7, 8, 9. together. For S. *Paul* in the 4. and 7. verſes mentioning the very word εἰδωλόθυτον and ſpeaking of things offered to Idolls ſaith *v.* 4. As concerning therefore the eating of thoſe things that are offerin ſacrifice unto Idols, οἴδαμεν ὅτι οὐδὲν εἴδωλον ἐν κόσμῳ we know that an Idoll is nothing in the world which is ſufficient light and purpoſely urged by the Apoſtle, to ſhew thoſe Corinthians, that if they had but ſo much knowledge they might lawfully, and without offence eate even things offered to Idols: *Non ollui igitur hominem Chriſtianum qui abſque doli religione Idolothytis veſcatur*, ſaith *Calvin* on the place; That ſeeing an Idol is but the aine figment of a humane braine, and ſo to e reputed for nothing, that therefore a chriian man is not polluted who without adoation of the Idoll eateth meat offered unto dols. Now the Apoſtle in *v.* 7. ſhewing he ignorance of ſuch as conceit any defilement in eating theſe or any other meats

bringeth

bringeth an argument to diſwade ſuch from any ſuch ſimplicity, or vaine conceit v. 8. ſaying, *But meat commendeth us not to God; for neither if we eate are we the better, neither if we eat not are we the worſe*: what can be more cleer to ſhew our Chriſtian liberty to eat not onely of theſe, but of all other meats whatſoever, and that there can be no pollution or defilement in the ſame, if we have but ſo much knowledge as to diſcerne it: *Si aliqui ſunt infirmi & ſcientia deſtituantur, non oportet, ut nos eorum cauſa Chriſtiana libertate fraudemur*: ſaith *Pet. Martyr* upon the place. Although ſome are weake, and deſtitute of knowledge, it doth not follow that we for their cauſe ſhould be deprived or cheated out of our Chriſtian liberty. *Reſpondet Paulus* (ſaith *Calvin* on the place) *& concedit coram Deo nihil referre, quibus veſcamur cibis* (*quos nobis liberum uſum permittat, quantum ad Conſcientiam*) *Paul* anſwereth and granteth, that before or in the preſence of God, or in reference unto God, it makes no matter what meats we eat (becauſe he granteth us the free uſe thereof for matter of Conſcience.) And ſaith *Brentius*, *ratio cur eſca nos non comendent Deo* (i.e. *commendatos & gratos non reddat Deo*) *ſumpta à Natura indifferentium & mediarum rerum in quibus nec Juſtitia nec peccatum ineſt*

Auguſt. in lib. queſt. Evangel.

The

The reaſon why meat cannot commend us to (that is, cannot render us commended and acceptable to God) is taken from the Nature of Indifferent things or mean things, that ſtand in the middle or between both, in which there is neither righteouſneſſe nor ſin. Yea to ſhew us, and that we may be ſure, that knowing and ſtrong Chriſtians have free liberty under the Goſpel to eate Idolothytes, or any other meats whatſoever, the Apoſtle taketh the ſame for granted in the next verſe, uſeing litterally the very word ἐξουσία liberty or power v. 9. ſaying; *but take heed leaſt by any meanes this liberty of yours become a ſtumbling block &c.* By which he clearly gives it out for granted, that we have liberty and power to eate thoſe or any other meats: onely he gives theſe Corinthians, a Caution, how to uſe that their liberty: of which and of this chapter, there will be by Gods permiſsion more ſpoken hereafter.

Seeing therfore, that ſo many cleer Texts of Scripture do ſo directly oppoſe that ſence, and Interpretation of that Text in *Act.* 15. to be any generall prohibition and ſo cleerly vindicateth the place from ſuch expoſition, ſtrongly holding forth unto us free liberty in point of conſcience, or Religion to eate of any of Gods Creatures without exception, yea of things themſelves offered to Idols one

of

one of the very particulars prohibited in the Text in hand (as we clearly ſee) much more of ſuch things as are killed of us by ſtrangling: or ſuch meats in whoſe confection Blood is intermingled, it hereby clearly convinceth ſuch of their great miſtakes of the true ſence of that place, and condemneth that their practice as a meer ſuperſtition in abſtaining from meats which are ſo freely & cleerly warranted, and allowed from, and by the Word of God to be with thankſgiving received of us, and will put them ſure upon a more ſcrutinous and diligent examen, or ſearch after ſome other more true and genuine ſence & meaning of that place, that it may better bereconciled to theſe Scriptures which ſeem in the letter, though they are not in the true ſence (if that be truly underſtood) ſo diſſonant from the ſame, but that it may well conſiſt therewith.

Although there hath been *ſat ſuperque* already ſaid in defence of our eating thoſe meats, to ſatisfie any reaſonable perſon: yet I ſhall briefly produce yet a fifth Text of Scripture for a full confirmation of what hath been laſt inſiſted upon, that as cleerly vindicateth that place in *Act.* 15. from that erroneous conſtruction of being a generall command to abſtain from the meats there mentioned, and this is 1 *Cor.* 10. *ch.* 25, 27. well weighed with the 28, and 29. verſes next folllowing: here being a direct countermand to that Text

in

in the ſence that they take it in: that being here commanded, which in their ſence is there forbidden, and therefore their ſence cannot be the true ſence of that place, v. 25. *Whatſoever is ſold in the ſhambles that eat, asking no queſtion for conſcience ſake.* Here although the caſe be hereby ſufficiently cleer; yet to prevent any frivolous cavill that might riſe and to put the matter out of all doubt or queſtion, the Apoſtle illuſtrateth this by adding yet a farther Command *v.* 27. *If any of them that believe not, bid you to a feaſt, and ye be diſpoſed to go, whatſoever is ſet before you eat, asking no queſtion for Conſcience ſake.* It being ſome queſtion, *Num liceret Chriſtiano* (ſaith *Seb. Meger. veſci de eſcis ſiquæ forte* (*ut fieri ſolebat*) *poſtquam idolis oblatæ eſſent in marcello promiſcue venderentur.* Whether it be lawfull for a Chriſtian, to eat of meats if perchance any (as the Cuſtome was) after they had been offered to Idols were ſold promiſcuouſly in the ſhambles: *reſpondit Apoſtolus* (ſaith *Calvin*) *generali ſententia licere veſci quibuſlibet ſana Conſcientia quia dominus permittit:* The Apoſtle anſwereth by a generall ſentence that it was lawfull to eat any with a ſafe Conſcience becauſe the Lord permitteth it. Againe the queſtion being (ſaith *Bullinger*) If any of the unbelievers whom I would not offend, invite me, what ſhall I

refuſe

refuſe his Table, leaſt I ſhould be compelled to eat things offered to Idols, he anſwereth (ſaith he) If any of the unbelievers invite them &c. *Ito quicquid in menſa apponitur ede nihil trepidans, aut quicquam conſcientiæ timens, quia nulla re externa polluitur*: Goe, and whatſoever is ſet upon the Table eat, ſtarting at nothing, nor fearing any matter of conſcience which is not polluted with any external thing. And that this is the ſence of the Apoſtle plainly appeareth by v. 29. if duely conſidered were uſeing the very word ἐλευθερία Liberty he plainly intimateth that a Chriſtian, except in caſe of offence to others have free liberty to eat of any meats, yea even of meats offered to Idols, which are ſuppoſed, but very unjuſtly to be in Act. 15. generaly forbidden. But in regard I ſhall hereafter againe have occaſion to inſiſt more upon theſe two chapters in particular the 8. and 10. of 1 *Cor.* I ſhall leave ſpeaking further thereof in this place.

I might adde to what hath been here ſaid theſe two Chapters delivered, what our Saviour Chriſt alſo ſaith *Mat.* 15. 11. and *Mar.* 7. 15. *There is nothing from without a man which entring into him, can defile him*; than which there cannot be a clearer evidence produced to vindicate the lawfulneſs of eating all meats: but of this I ſhall

have occasion more seasonably to speake in the last Chapter.

I might also have urged *Peters* vision *Act.* 10. where the Apostle is commanded to kill, and eat all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth and wild beasts and creeping things, and fowles of the Aire *v.* 12, 13. and is taught to call nothing *common or uncleane* v. 15. but in regard it may happily be objected that this being a Parable may not be so binding to this purpose, I shall not therefore here insist upon the same.

I might likewise here produce the Apostle *Pauls* reprof of S. *Peter*, *Gal.* 2. where he withstood him to the face v. 11. because he withdrew from eating with theGentiles at the comeing of the Jews *v.* 12. and seeming to conforme himselfe to the ceremoniall observations of the Jewes v. 14. But these things were but to light a candle to the Sunne, or to cast water into the Sea where there is enough already.

Thus I hope by this time it is sufficiently evident by the severall Scriptures before cited to all understanding Judgements, yea the matter put past all peradventure that Christians under the Gospell may lawfully, *& sanâ conscientiâ* eat any meats, whatsoever shall be set before them, so that thereby our practice in eating such meats is not onely cleerly vindicated;

vindicated but alſo it evidently appeareth th
the Text in hand is greatly miſtaken, and gro
ly abuſed and miſunderſtood, and therefo
ſomething elſe muſt be the ſence and intentio
of the Apoſtles in that place, than what is b
theſe Opinioniſts thence pretended, and whic
ſhould ſeem they either do not, or will n
underſtand, which ſhall by divine permiſſio
be hereafter evidently declared.

CHAP. III.

*An exact Propheſy of the coming of ſuch
hold this Opinion; with reaſons deduc
from the word of God, proving the unſound
neſs of the ſame.*

AS it is I hope ſufficiently evident, an
ſatisfactorily apparent, eſpecially to im
partiall and unbyaſſed Judgements that tho
Scriptures in *Act.* 15. cannot poſsibly be an
generall prohibition of meats offered to Idol
things ſtrangled or blood, as hath been hi
therto made good from the ſeverall Scriptur
before Alledged, being utterly diſſentaneou
from any ſuch ſence, or Expoſition: So
followeth in the next place to make good th
ſame from certaine reaſons, or conſideratio
grounded upon the Word of God, and hold
in

ing forth the lawfulneſs of eating all or any meats whatſoever, without the leaſt polluti-on, or defilement in eating of the ſame.

The firſt reaſon to maintaine what hath hitherto been delivered, is deduced from the 1 *Tim.* 4. before cited, 1, 2, 3, 4. verſes whereby is evidently foretold the very coming of ſuch as ſhall maintaine this opinion, ſuch as the Papiſts and theſe Haimapeſthytes in this very particular are in theſe latter dayes: And therefore no marvell, that they are accordingly now come for the fulfilling of the ſaid Propheſy, ſeeing it muſt needs be ſo.

Verſe 1. *Now the ſpirit ſpeaketh expreſsly, that in the latter times ſome ſhall depart from the faith, giving heeed to ſeduceing ſpirits and doctrines of devills:*

V. 2. *Speaking lies in Hypocriſie, hath their Conſcience ſeared with an hot Iron.*

V. 3. *Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abſtaine from meats, which God hath created to be received with thankſgiving of them, which believe and know the truth.*

V. 4. *For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refuſed, if it be received with thankſgiving*, as before delivered from all which may be drawn this Argument.

If in the latter times ſuch ſhall ariſe, as are by the Apoſtle foretold, and ſhall maintaine the ſame doctrine, and practiſe, as is by the

Apoſtle foretold, they ſhould doe, *viz.* commanding to abſtaine from meats &c. ſuch muſt needs be the perſons there meant, and intended, who ſhould come, and their doctrine, and practiſe muſt needs be erroneous.

But not onely the Papiſts, and others long ſince, but others now alſo are riſen up, departing from the faith, or doctrine of the Church in commanding to abſtaine from meats according to the Ap. prediction

Eraſ. in lib. de Elect. cib. ad Chr. Ep. Baſil.

Therefore they are the perſons, who were meant and foreſpoken of by the Apoſtle in that place; & their doctrine, and practice muſt needs be erroneous.

The Major is cleer by the Text it ſelfe, that ſuch ſhould come:

The Minor is cleer by viſible experience that ſuch are come:

Therefore the Concluſion cannot be denyed, but that theſe are the Perſons ſpoken of by Saint *Paul*, and their doctrine, becauſe the Apoſtle calls it a doctrine of Devils, muſt needs be erroneous, and falſe.

Tria autem hic præcipue conſideranda ſunt (ſaith *Cruciger* on this place) Three things are chiefly here to be conſidered, *Primum* firſt ſaith he, that he teſtifieth cleerly, and by name, *quod Diabolus &c.* that the Devill is the Author of Evill opinions and traditions.

Secundum

Secundum &c. Secondly that he propheſieth, that wicked Teachers ſhall undoubtedly happen in the Church. *Tertium &c.* Thirdly, ſaith he, that expreſsly and in *ſpecie*, and in particular he ſetteth down examples of thoſe Traditions, *ut agnoſci poſsint qui ſunt impii doctores, & quæ ſint impiæ traditiones:* that it may be known who are theſe wicked Teachers, and what their wicked Traditions are, and then the ſame expoſitor goes on. *Itaque* (ſaith he) *valde conducit hæc Pauli Prophetia ad confirmandas pias mentes contra titulum Eccleſiæ, quem ſibi arrogant Authores illarum Traditionum*, Therefore this Propheſy of *Paul* greatly availeth to confirm Pious mindes againſt that Title, or claime of the Church, which the Authors of thoſe Traditions, arrogate unto themſelves. Thus he. Neither can theſe late Opinioniſts: with any cavills ſhift it off themſelves, by anſwering that the Apoſtle in this place meant not them, but the Papiſts, that hold an opinion againſt certain meats. For then might the Papiſts, as well ſhift it off them upon the Manichees, and the Maniches upon the Cataphryges and their Author *Montanus* who firſt ordained abſtinence from meats, and againſt whom *Apollonius* wrote &c. each pretending that the Apoſtle ſpeaketh of other; *At Paulus non de perſonis*

Euſeb. l. 5. cap. 18.

Personis hic agit sed de reipsa Jodocus Vilichius, *Paul* doth not treat here of persons, but of the thing it self (*viz.* of abstaining from meats offered &c. which he in v. 1. calleth a doctrine of Devils) *Quamobrem* (saith the same Author) *etiamsi centum diversæ Sectæ proferantur, quæ tamen eadem laborent hypocrisi in cibis prohibendis, omnes eundem sustinebant reatum.* Wherefore although there are an hundred different Sects brought forth, which notwithstanding labour with the same hypocrisy in forbidding meats, they all shall beare the same guilt; (that is, of giving heed to seduceing spirits and doctrines of divels, of speaking lyes in hypocrisy &c. Who therefore that is endued with any spark of Christianity, or fear of God, will not take speciall heed how he embraceth such pernicious doctrines, as will (if we believe the word of God) expose him and make him lyable to so grand a guilt, as to be guilty of lying and hypocrisy, because he maintaineth, that which is not the truth, as to be guilty of giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devills who can thus turn him out of spirituall worship, and make him believe that he must worship God by eating, or not eating meats, and this leadeth us to the second reason.

Aug. in lib. 1. cap. 66. de doct. Eccles. calleth such *non christianos sed Hæreticos.*

The

The ſecond reaſon why the Text cannot be binding to all Chriſtian Conſciences under the Goſpel to abſtaine from thoſe meats, but that we may lawfully eate thereof, is: Becauſe Chriſtian Religion doth not conſiſt in meat and drink. What Simplicity is it for any to dream that there can be any pollution, or ſinfulneſs in meats orderly, and moderately taken? What operation can there be in theſe meats more then other to make men ſinfull in eating thereof? Is there any ſhew of probability that by, or after our eating of theſe meats Satan ſhould have more power over us or that we ſhould be more prone to any ſin, or that our ſoules or affections ſhould thereby be more eſtranged from God, than after our eating of any other meats whatſoever? for doth not our Saviour plainly and flatly affirm, that *Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man. Mat.* 15. 11. How then is it poſſible, that theſe meats ſhould defile us? ſhall we not give credit to Jeſus Chriſt herein? *non refert quo cibo vescaris, ſed quo animo id facias*, ſaith *Calvin* upon this Text. It makes no matter what meat thou eateſt, but with what minde thou doſt it.

Eraſ. in præf. aut Ep. in 1. *ad Cor. Aug. in lib.* 1. *cap.* 66. *de doct. & opi. Eccl.*

Againe how can the eating of ſome meats more than others make men at all more holy,

more zealous, more penitent, more righteous,

Tertull. in Epiſt. de Jud. cib. Eraſm. in 1 Cor. 8.

when the Apoſtle plainly declareth, *That the Kingdome of God is not meat and drinke, but righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy in the holy Ghoſt*: Rom. 14. 17

ſo that the ſumme hereof ſtands thus,

All things that defile not may lawfully be eaten: But theſe meats defile not,

Ergo they may lawfully be eaten.

Both the Propoſitions are proved not onely by the premiſes in this preſent reaſon, but alſo by the ſeverall Texts of Scripture before cited: *viz.* 1 *Cor.* 6. 12. *Rom.* 14. 14, 20. 1 *Cor.* 8. 8. eſpecially 1 *Tim.* 4. 4. *Every Creature of God is good* (and if good then it defileth not) *and nothing to be refuſed* (then it may lawfully be eaten) there is the major proved: and the Minor is as cleerly proved *Mark. chap.* 7. *v.* 15. *There is nothing from without a man, that entring into him can defile him.* How then can theſe meats defile man? The concluſion then muſt needs follow, that they may lawfully and warantably be eaten, and thoſe texts in the Acts, muſt have ſome other ſence and interpretation.

Neither (that we may deſcend to a third reaſon) can they object, that it is not any inherent ſinfullneſs, or uncleaneſs in the meats, or in the act of eating, that cauſeth

his their Abſtinence but that it is in obedience to a Command.

For they well know, that if it be in obedience to a command: every perpetuall command in Scripture is grounded upon ſome foundation *viz.* upon ſome perpetuall law of God, & if it be in obedience to a Law, or command, then to diſobey that Law, or command, muſt needs be ſin, ſin being any breach of the Law of God: 1 *Joh.* 3. 4. Now if it be a Law of God, it is to be enquired whether it be Legall, or Evangelicall; if Legall, whether it be *Præceptum Judiciale*, *morale*, or *Ceremoniale*.

That it is a Judiciall precept, none will affirme; The Judiciall Law conſiſting in the due adminiſtration of Juſtice, or determination of Right, and equity amongſt men or between party, and party.

That it is not a morall precept plainely appeareth by the laſt reaſon *viz.* becauſe theſe meats for any thing in them defile not a man, neither make us better or worſe.

But if we take a ſurvey of the Ceremoniall Law, we ſhall cleerly finde, that to abſtaine from meats muſt needs be a ceremoniall obſervation: the ceremoniall Law conſiſting in ſuch things *Heb.* 9. 10.

Now none will offer to maintain the Ceremoniall Law to be perpetuall: how then can

the abſtinence from meats be a perpetuall command, and how greatly do they erre, who take the ſence of that place as a perpetuall binding precept to all Chriſtians under the Goſpell, which to do reviveth the ceremoniall Law, which none can deny to be aboliſhed by the coming of Jeſus Chriſt, *Epheſ.* 2. 15. *Col.* 2. 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23. *Heb.* 9. 10, 11, 12.

The Argument then ſtands thus,

All Obſervations of the Ceremoniall Law are aboliſhed by Chriſt, and unlawfull under the Goſpell, as binding to all Chriſtians:

But to abſtaine from ſome kindes of meat more then from other is to obſerve the Ceremoniall Law:

Ergo To abſtaine from meats &c. is aboliſhed and unlawfull, under the Goſpell, as binding to all Chriſtians, and ſo ought not to continue, as any generall Ordinance in the Chriſtian Church.

The major propoſition plainly appeareth by the places before cited, *Eph.* 2. 15. *Having aboliſhed in his fleſh the enmity, even the Law of Commandements contained in Ordinances.*

Col. 2. 14. *Blotting out the hand-writing of Ordinances that was againſt us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing*

ſt to the Croſs. See verſ. 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 24.

The Minor, or Aſſumption, as well as the Major is cleer, *Heb.* 9. v. 10. *Which ſtood only in meats, and drinkes, and diverſe waſhings and carnall Ordinances impoſed on them, untill the time of reformation:*

V. 11. *Chriſt being come an high Prieſt of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect Tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to ſay not of this building:*

V. 12. *Neither by the blood of Goats, and Calves, but by his own blood he entred in once into the holy place, having obtained eternall redemption for us.*

All which conſidered, we may infallibly conclude, That the abſtinence from meats muſt of neceſſity be aboliſhed, and taken away by the death of Chriſt, and muſt ceaſe from being any generall Ordinance in the Chriſtian Church: which indeed to put all out of doubt the Apoſtle Saint *Paul* flatly concludeth for us, reproving ſuch as fondly go about to practiſe, or maintain any ſuch unwarrantable opinion.

Col. 2. 16. *Let no man therefore Judge you in meat or in drink, or in reſpect of any holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath dayes.*

V. 17.

*V.*17. *which are the ſhadow of things to come, but the body is of Chriſt.*

V. 20. *Wherefore if ye be dead with Chriſt from the rudiments of the World, why, as though living in the World, are ye ſubject unto Ordinances;*

V. 21. (*Touch not, taſt not handle not,*

V. 22. *Which all are to periſh with the uſing*) *after the commandements and doctrines of men.*

V. 23. *Which things have indeed a ſhew of Wiſedome in Will-worſhip, and humility, and neglecting of the body, not in any honour to the ſatisfying of the fleſh.*

What can be more plaine? The Apoſtle intimating that ſuch are not dead with Chriſt from the rudiments of the world, or ſeek not Juſtification by the death of Chriſt, but by the ceremonies of the Law, which goe about to continue theſe ceremoniall obſervations under the Goſpel: as if they could render them ever the more righteous, *Chriſtiana Juſtitia* (ſaith *Melancthon* on that 20. verſe) *requirit mortificationem carnis, humanæ traditiones non mortificant*: Chriſtian righteouſneſs requireth mortification of the fleſh; humane traditions do not mortifie. *Nec vivificant ceremonia legalis* (ſaith *Marlorat*) *ergo non ſunt neceſſariæ ad Juſtificationem:* Neither do legall ceremonies make us alive; therefore they

they are not neceſſary to Juſtification. *Admiratur ergo* (ſaith *Eraſm. Sarcerius*) *eorum Stultitiam, qui poſtquam gratis Juſtificari poſſunt, imo Juſtificati ſunt quærunt per opera legis, & humanas traditiones juſtificari.* He admireth the folly of them, who, after they may be freely juſtified, yea have been juſtified, do ſeek by the works of the Law, and humane traditions to be juſtified.

Yea, ſeeing the Apoſtle in *v.* 23. calleth theſe ceremoniall obſervations of meats &c. flatly ἐθελοθρησκείαν *Will-worſhip: quum quiſque ultro ſibi religionem fingit, quam ſequatur* (as *Bullinger* hath it) when every man of his own accord forgeth a religion to himſelfe, which he may follow; who, that hath underſtanding, will by maintaining an abſtinence from theſe meats, offer to revive, and ſet up a new the ceremoniall law, Superſtition or Will-worſhip as a ſtanding Ordinance among Chriſtians under the Goſpell? If it be alledged, that it is an Evangelicall precept, how it is an Evangelicall precept will come hereafter to be conſidered.

Eraſm. in Annot. in Rom: 14. c.

Thus I hope we ſee it ſufficiently manifeſt, how much not onely, ſeverall Texts of Scripture, but alſo ſeverall reaſons deduced from the ſame ſpeak for the lawfullneſs of, and againſt any ceremoniall, or ſuperſtitious abſtinence

ſtinence from any meats whatſoever under the Goſpel, and what irreconcileable oppoſition there is betwixt thoſe Scriptures, and that in *Act.* 15. in the ſence pretended. And therefore ſeeing that ſome thing elſe muſt of neceſſity be the ſence of that place; it is in the next place to be enquired, what other ſenſes may be raiſed from the ſame, or expoſitions by help of the Word of God may be made thereof.

CHAP. IV.

A more profitable interpretation of the Text in hand, than that of theſe Opinioniſts although unſound; that it may the better appeare, how eaſie it is to maintain errour.

NOw ſeeing there is free liberty granted to Chriſtians under the Goſpel to eat of al kinds of meats whatſoever, without ſcruple, or exceptions at any thing in the meats themſelves by ſo many ſeverall Scriptures, both aſſerting the lawfullneſs, and commanding the practice thereof, whereby it is ſo evidently apparent that there is ſuch an utter miſtake of that portion of Scripture, that theſe Opinioniſts ſence and expoſition thereof is cleerly overthrown, & that the true ſence and interpretation

retation thereof is farre otherwiſe, than they would have it: It remaines therefore to diſcover, and lay open, what the true and genuine ſence, meaning and interpretation of that place, and the drift and Intention of the Apoſtles is in that Command, or in thoſe words in Act. *Act.* 15. *ch.*

V. 20. *But that we write unto them, that they abſtaine from pollutions of Idols, and from fornication, and from things ſtrangled, and from blood.*

V. 28. *For it ſeemed good to the Holy Ghoſt, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burthen, than theſe neceſſary things:*

V. 29. *That ye abſtain from meats offered to Idols, and from blood, and from things ſtrangled; from which if ye keep your ſelves ye ſhall do well.*

And that I may give ſomewhat the more full ſatisfaction in treating of the ſence hereof, and may, if it may be, taken off the edge of mens too itching deſires after novelties from too credulous, and inconſiderate compliance with erroneous Doctrines, I ſhall firſt try, what ſence or miſinterpretation may be raiſed and ſtrained from the place, which may carry with it ſome ſhew or probability of truth, and prove unſound; and afterwards ſhall by divine aſsiſtance, I hope no leſs ſatisfactorily than evidently ſhew forth, and declare, what

Was

was the main drift, and true intention of th
Apoſtles in that Prohibition.

Firſt therefore if we were of the numb
of thoſe, who without ſerious or ſoli
weighing of the truth, will adhere to an
thing to maintaine a Cavill, yea will rath
renounce the generall practice of the Churc
oppoſe the Analogie of faith, reject plai
Scripture conſequence, than ſubmit to truth
if diſſentaneous to their own whimmes, pr
judicate opinion, and foreſtalled judgement
if I ſay, we were thus minded to Cavil, w
might ſay that in regard fornication is in th
Text inſerted among the reſt, which ſtande
in oppoſition to a moral vertue chaſtity, there
fore blood in that place might be taken fo
bloodſhed, as it is elſewhere, *Numb.* 35.

V. 33. *So ye ſhall not pollute the land, where in ye are: for blood it defileth the Land and the Land cannot be cleanſed of the blood that is ſhed therein, but by the blood of him, that ſhed it.*

Iſai. 1. 15. *Your hands are full of blood* ſo alſo *Pſal.* 9. 12.

Mat. 27. 24. *Rev.* 6. 10. and many othe
places, and ſome have ſeemed to take th
word blood here in this ſence.

And for things ſtrangled ſeeing the word o
God preſcribeth ſeverall rules in outward
things for decency, health, commerce carri
age &

ge &c. in his peoples outward converſation, s appeares *Deut.* 22. through out; *viz.* to nſtance in one, or two of the particulars herein *v.* 11. *Thou ſhalt not weare a garment of diverſe ſorts as of Woollen and Linnen together.*

V. 12. *thou ſhalt make thee fringes upon the four quarters of thy veſture, wherewith thou covereſt thy ſelfe &c.*

And as for healths ſake *Paul* adviſeth *Timothy* 1 *Tim.* 5. 23. *To drink no longer water, but uſe a litle wine for thy ſtomachs ſake, and thine often Infirmities:* As *Timothy*, I ſay, was in that place for his healths ſake prohibited to drink water: Even ſo we might ſay, that thoſe Chriſtians at *Antioch*, were in this of the *Acts* for decency, or healths ſake prohibited to eat things ſtrangled, that is, ſuch things as were of themſelves, or by caſualty ſtrangled, as by hanging in hedges or the like, choaking or drowning in ditches, pits, rivers, &c. but that they ſhould abſtaine from ſuch things as undecent and abominable meats, and unwholſome dirt; and this not unlike to that command *Lev.* 17. 15. *And every ſoul that eateth, that which died of it ſelfe, or that which was torne with beaſts &c.* or according to thoſe directions, or Commands given by the Lord unto his people the Jewes *Lev.* 11. where we may read at large throughout the chapt. how the

the Lord commandeth, or directeth his people, what particular creatures might, and what might not be eaten by them whether beasts, birds, fowls or creeping things.

Now if things ſtrangled be taken in this ſence, I hope we erre not, neither can any Juſtly charge us with the ſame: For as we eate not ſuch kindes of creatures as dogges, Foxes, Wolves, Beares, Horſes, kites, crowes or the like: ſo are we carefull to abſtain from eating all ſuch things, as die of themſelves by ſtrangling, or any other caſualtie, altogether nauſeating, and abhorring all ſuch meats *tanquam cadavera*, or deteſtable Carkaſſes, or Carrion, unwholſome or abominable to be eaten: ſo that in this ſence we erre not, but are carefull to obſerve the Apoſtles directions, or commands in that place: when the Haimapeſthytes nicely would prove ridiculous.

And indeed if we ſhould take the Text in this ſence, we might put them hard to it, if we were minded to inſiſt upon Cavills; Nay there were farre more probability that the Apoſtles command to abſtain from blood and from things ſtrangled might be meant of abſtaining from blood ſhed, and from creatures that die by caſualty *viz.* by hanging drowning &c. becauſe to this ſence there is no other Text in Scripture contradicteth, being expounded

expounded in a right ſence, therefore I ſay the Apoſtles expreſsions in that place may farre more probably be ſo meant, & intended, then that they ſhould thereby intend abſolutely to review and ſet up againe the Ceremoniall Law, as a ſtanding ordinance in the Chriſtian Church, which they well know, was by Chriſt aboliſhed (as is before proved) and there being ſo many Texts of Scripture directly oppoſing that ſence, and affirming that all meats in point of conſcience or religion may lawfully be eaten.

Yet notwithſtanding we adhere not to this ſence, as the true meaning or intention of the Apoſtles in that place: onely we have thus much inſiſted hereupon, as a Caution by the way to ſhew how eaſie a matter it is to wreſt or pervert Scripture, yea to finde out Texts, that may to unſound Judgements, and cavilling Spirits ſeem to favour errour; and how difficult it is, when Satan doth infuſe contentious ſpirits into men for truth to prevaile againſt them, but that through Satans aſſiſting Subtilty they may, and through the Corruption & perverſenes of their own nature they will finde out ſomething to ſay againſt it: and no marvell ſeeing Satan can transforme himſelfe into an Angel of Light 2 *Cor.* 11. 13, 14, 15. yea can himſelfe cite Scripture alſo to uphold and (if poſsible) make good his diabolicall

and helliſh Stratagems withall. By all thereſore which hath here been ſaid, we may evidently ſee, how eaſie a matter tis for Schiſmaticall Spirits to ſtirre up ſtrife, to make Schiſme in Religion: to breed diſturbance and make rents in the Church by wreſting Scripture and endeavouring to maintain errour and that with very ſpecious pretences and ſhewes of reall Truth, yea to back the ſame with Scriptures which to unſound Judgements ſeem to look that way, if not deliberately, and maturely weighed, and rightly underſtood, whereby even good Judgements may be puzled, and weak Chriſtians be deluded; yea in ſomuch that if it were poſſible ſuch falſe Teachers ſhall deceive the very Elect.

As we have inſtanced in this very particular laſt mentioned *viz.* what expoſition we might make of this Text in hand, although in my judgement not very ſound, and yet more likely than that of theirs, and what ſpecious ſhews might be made and Scripture alſo produced to maintain the ſame although erroneous; wherby with Cavills we might puzle others to anſwer, and convince the ſame a ſufficient Caveat to informe us that every ſeeming probability is not abſolute verity, nor every raſh inconſiderate received notion a true or ſolid expoſition. *Omne quod*

rutilat

futilat non eſt aurum. Every ſhaddow is no true ſubſtance. Much may be ſaid in defence of Errour, and Cavils raiſed againſt the cleereſt Truth. But this it is to ſuffer fancy to overſway judgment to fix upon a bare *opinion* with out ſolid reaſon, to peruſe erroneous Authors, who will not want the ſpecious baits of falſehood, wherewith to catch us, before we underſtand the truth. The true ſence and meaning of the place in hand and the intention of the Apoſtles in the ſame, being far otherwiſe, than either here in the Chapter, or by the abſtainers from meats is pretended: as will anon I hope to the meaneſt capacity evidently appeare.

CHAP. V.

Containeth certain brief cautions neceſſary to be obſerved for the right underſtanding of Scripture, and for prevention of erroneous doctrines and opinions.

BUt that mens Jndgements may not be thus deluded and miſled into the by-paths of miſtakes, and involved in the perplexing Meanders of various errours: I ſhall in the next place according to my promiſe in the

Proem, deliver some few cautions very briefly, as much conduceing to the right understanding of the Scripture, and which indeed ought amonst all men, especialy among such as will intermeddle with expounding the word of God, or discussing points of Divinity carefully to be observed.

The first caution to be observed is; That we do not easily reject that which both before the times of Popery, and since the Reformation, hath been the constant practise of the Church, held forth by Godly, Learned, Orthodox & Judicious Divines in all Ages, for it is very improbable that all such men so eminent for Piety, Learning, Industry and Judgment, yea that the whole Catholick Church, ever since the Apostles times, notwithstanding all their knowledge, study and diligence, notwithstanding all that portion of Gods spirit, which doth doubtlesse in some measure accompany and assist his people, yet should for all this hitherto utterly, and altogether miss of those truths, which now by some few particular overhasty, inconsiderate, illiterate Judegments could only be found out, and especially seeing upon such Satan can most easily work, and prevaile, not onely by misleading them into errrour, but also by stirring up in them a spirit of opposition and perverseness

and

and by foisting into their minds various shifts, and Cavills, under specious shews of truth to disturb the Church, puzzle mens Judgements, yea to *deceive if it were possible the very Elect.* And no marvell that it should be so, and that such should so much erre, seeing the Apostle St. *Peter* affirmeth, That they that are unlearned and unstable wrest the Scriptures unto their own destruction 2 *Peter ch.* 3. *v.*16.

2. When any new Notion, or Novel Opinion first starteth up into any mans braine, which seemeth to take its foundation from any portion of Scripture, let him before he fixeth upon any conclusion be sure to peruse, and throughly to weigh the opinion and Judgement of learned and orthodox Expositors not onely upon that portion of Scripture, but also upon all other Scriptures, that any way concerne the same point, or Subject, about which he maketh inquisition. For since Prophesy, Revelation, and those extraordinary gifts of the Spirit have long agoe ceased, as the Apostle *Paul* foretold they should 1 *Cor.* 13. 8. it is not for any man out of his own muddy braine presently to raise conclusions from any Text, and to possess people, that it is not by humane learning, but that he hath it by Inspiration; which is but meerly Satans delusi-

on; all men well knowing, and seeing that here is neither Revelation, Miracle, nor any other extraordinary gift of the Spirit to confirme their doctrine; but that what they say, if it be so much, is but at the uttermost from humane learning or rather from some humane Notions (to say no worse) that many times without due deliberation slip into mens mindes, and thence are broached for sound doctrines; And thus have all errours and heresies sprung up, that hitherto have come forth into the World. But to prevent all this it is not for us of ourselves or from the work of unstable and unlearned writers to broach our own or any new opinions, but that we first consult with the workes of such solid Divines in each point, that we take in hand as have made it the business, of their whole lives by earnest prayer and diligent searching into the whole word of God, to find out the truth, and by their constant and continual lucubrations, and by those abilities in searching and knowledge which the Lord hath vouchsafed unto them *medullitus exossarunt* have Anatomized and cleerly laid open each text of Scripture, and point of doctrine in the proper parts and genuine sence thereof.

3. The third caution to prevent errour and misunderstanding of Scripture is, to weigh seri-

ſeriouſly all points and Tenents in queſtion and before we raiſe concluſions, or fix our Judgement upon any ſence, which is diſſentaneous to the Judgements of the Church, throughly to underſtand the point or ſubject in hand, in its nature and definition, or at leaſt Deſcription, In its cauſes efficient, materiall, formall, finall, in its ſeverall Diſtinctions, as the mater ſhall require, and in the ſeverall Grounds and Arguments for the ſame. For how can they chooſe but incurr miſtakes that know not what they plead about? and how ſhould they chooſe but be deluded, that liſten to errour before they underſtand the Truth?

4. To prevent Errour be ſure to compare Scripture with Scripture, and not to take up with one or ſome few Texts, that ſeem moſt to favour the cauſe, but that all texts or places throughout the word as well *Pro* as *Con* be throughly weighed, and compared together, before any Coucluſion at all be raiſed. Which one thing, If the embracer of this opinion had onely obſerved about the matter in hand, they would not doubtleſs have ſo raſhly miſinterpreted thoſe Texts in *Act.* 15. 20, 29.

5. Men may yet be deluded, and miſled into errour if they weigh not well, and throughly underſtand, what deductions are

or may be drawn from Scripture by good consequence touching any point in debate, before they embrace any opinion, or suffer their judgements to settle in the same: Good consequence much helping, and conduceing to the cleering of a cause, when the letter either is not cleer, or seemeth to look another way: And it being an apparent character of no less stupidity than perverseness to slip into errour for want of due premeditation, how much consequences deduced from the Word of God do, or may make against the same, and afterwards to be enforced to find out shifts and cavills to uphold that errour, because we will not yeild unto the truth.

6. It mainly concerneth every man, that would not err in judgement, that by the helps aforesaid, or the like, he find out, and well understand the drift and intention of the Holy Ghost in the very thing it selfe, about which he enquireth, or what the Prophet, Apostle &c. from the same chiefly aimeth at touching any matter, or Text in controversy whatsoever (which hath respect to the subordinate finall cause) that he may be well satisfied, that the matter in question derogate not from, but fully accord with, and be consentaneous to the Analogy of faith.

And thus farr for these not altogether unnecessary cautions, which I have onely *obiter* &

& breviter toucht upon, before I proceeded to the ſequell or remainder of this diſcourſe, that as I have by the obſervation thereof, before ſhewed the lawfullneſs of theſe meats in hand, or any other meats whatſoever for any ſpirituall defilement in the ſame: ſo I may in that which followeth, by the like obſervation of theſe Rules or Cautions cleerly ſet forth the main ſcope of the place in hand, and the true intention of the Apoſtles, or the Holy Ghoſt by them in the ſame.

CHAP. VI.

Proceedeth to diſcover the true ſence and meaning of the text in hand, by ſhewing the main intention of the Apoſtles in the ſame: viz. that it is onely a condeſcention in theſe indifferent things to thoſe Chriſtians weakneſs.

NOw by divine aſſiſtance I ſhall proceed: and as I have before ſhewed, what is not the true ſence of the Text in hand, by compareing it with other portions of Scripture, contradicting that ſence, which therfore cannot be as our Opponents pretend, as appeareth cleerly, by what hath been before delivered: ſo now I ſhall next endeavour to ſet forth

forth and declare what is the ſence, and tr
meaning of the place, and this chiefly b
ſearching out the main drift, and intentio
of the Apoſtles touching that direction, c
command to abſtain from meats offered t
Idols, things ſtrangled and blood.

As the main end of the word of God, an
of each part thereof in reference to men is fo
the good and benefit of mankind in genera
in teaching and directing them in the way
of God whatſoever things were written afor
time being written for our learning *Rom.* 1
4. ſo every particular inſtruction to any pa
ticular perſon, Congregation or Nation
forth and delivered by the Prophets, Ap
ſtles, and Servants of Jeſus Chriſt was for th
good of thoſe people, or perſons to who
it was delivered, and for the building of the
up in their moſt holy faith; but miniſtred an
diſpenſed, and their doctrine prepared, an
fitted according as they were found capab
of the ſame. And therefore the Apoſtle ſait
to the Corinthians 1 *Cor.* 3, 2. *I haue fed y*
with milk, and not with meat, for hitherto y
haue not beeu able to bear it, neither yet now a
ye able v. 3. *for ye are yet carnall &c.* the A
poſtle drawing them by degrees from the
ſinfull wayes, as he found their capacity, an
ability fitted to receive and bear his inſtruc
ons.

Thu

Thus also doth the Apostle deale with the Hebrews *ch.* 5. *v.* 12. *For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need, that one teach you againe, which be the first principles of the Oracles of God, and are become such, as have need of milk and not of strong meat.*

V. 13. *for every one that useth milke, is unskilfull in the word of Righteousnes: for he is a Babe.*

V. 14. *But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discerne good and evill.*

Here we see that as there were weak christians or Babes in knowledge and strong Christians, or of full Age, who were able to discerne betwixt good and evil: so there was milk and strong meat discreetly administred to each accordingly.

And such weak Christians or Babes in knowledge were these Christians and their teachers at Antioch in this 15. of the *Acts*; yea so weake, and such Babes were they in knowledge, that they understood not their freedome from the ceremoniall Law, but imagined that they ought to be circumcised, and to keep the Law of *Moses*, *v.* 1, 2, 3. insomuch that the Apostles were enforced to feed them being thus unskilfull in the word of righteousnes with milk, by condescending to their weakness in suffering them to observe some

ſome rites of the ceremoniall Law, being b
things of indifferency, as the abſtinence fro
things ſtrangled and blood, to pleaſe the
in ſome meaſure like children in their fond d
ſires, till they could by degrees weane the
from the ſame, and the better fit them fo
ſtronger meat by ſetting them in more know
ledge of their Chriſtian liberty.

Yea thus it is very remarkable to obſerv
how the Apoſtles in this manner applyed, an
fitted themſelves, and their doctrine, or In
ſtructions to the ſeverall tempers, capaciti
and conſtitutions of thoſe ſeverall perſons, o
people to whom they ſpake, or wrote, an
therefore Saint *Paul* ſaith 1 *Cor.* 19. *ch.*

V. 19. *For though I be free from all men, ye
have I made myſelf ſervant unto all, that I migh
gaine the more.*

V. 20. *And unto the Jewes I became as
Jew, that I might gaine the Jews: to them tha
are under the Law, As under the Law, that
might gaine them that are under Law.*

V. 21. *To them, that are without Law, a
without Law (being not without Law to God
but under the Law to Chriſt,) that I might gai
them that are without Law.*

V. 22. *To the weake became I as weake, tha
I might gaine the weake: I am made all thing
to all men, that I might by all meanes ſav
ſome.*

Now

Now how the Apoſtle was made all things all men, that he might by all meanes ſave me, appeareth, in that he applyed and conformed himſelf to all ſorts of people in things indifferency, changing himſelf therein according to the ſociety, that he came amongſt. *mia fieri eſt ſe in omnes formas mutare* (ſaith Calvin) *prout res poſtulaverit, aut diverſas personas pro hominum veritate induere*, and therefore did the Apoſtle condeſcend to ſuch in ſome of their practiſes, from which notwithſtanding he knew himſelf free. *Accommodaſe eorum Ceremoniis ad tempus: ſed coram eo, & quoad conſcientiam manebat ibi ſalva, & integra ſua libertas*; (ſaith Peter Martyr) uſing this liberty in things wherein he knew there was neither good nor evill, as a holy policy that he might the more inſinuate himſelf into them, by agreeing with them, and condeſcending unto them in ſome things of indifferency that he might by degrees, and by pleaſeing them in ſome triviall matters, the better work upon them, and prevaile with them in matters of high concernment for the ſalvation of their ſoules and thus he giveth directions to the Corinthians to behave themſelves and teſtifieth it to be his own practice: 1 *Cor.* 10. *ch.*

V. 13. *Give none offence neither to the Jews nor to the Gentiles nor to the Church of God.*

V. 33.

V.33. Even as I pleaſe all men in all thin not ſeeking mine owne profit, but the profit of m ny, that they may be ſaved.

Sed certo certius eſt Paulum de rebus adia poſſe (ſaith P. *Martyr & per ſe licitis loqui, quibus ſe hominibus accomodare voluit*, as *M lorat expreſſeth it.* And this leaſt if he ſhou have contradicted them in all things, inſte of winning them he ſhonld become an occa on of ſtumbling, and offence unto the which in the place laſt cited, and elſewhe he forbiddeth, yea he might have diſcourag them and leſs prevailed with them in his ma deſigne of their converſion, and ſalvatio eſpecially ſeeing Chriſtians at their firſt co verſion were but weake in faith, and know ledge, it was neceſſary to comply in ſome me ſure with them, the better to ſtrenghth them, encourage them, and to winn them degrees to embrace his doctrine.

And thus did the Apoſtles deale with t Chriſtians at Antioch, by condeſcending them in ſome things directly as the Apoſ *Paul* carryed himſelfe to all ſorts of peopl for as they carryed themſelves towards tho Jewiſh Teachers at *Antioch* and *Jeruſalem* and Gentile hearers at *Antioch*; ſo dealt S *Paul* with all ſorts as is before ſaid: with th Jews he became as a Jew, that he might gai the Jews: with the weake, as weake, to gai

th

weak; yea with them that were under the
, as under the law, that he might gain them
at were under the Law. That is in regard it
s a matter of difficultie on the ſudden to
an ſuch from the obſervation of the Cere-
oniall Law, that had been ſo long under the
e Law, ſuch as were thoſe teachers of cir-
ncision, & of the Law of *Moſes* in this chap.
Act. 15. yea the Apoſtles well knowing,
t if he ſhould endeavouron the ſudden to
e thoſe off the Law, that had ever been trai-
d up under the Law, he might be an occa-
n of ſtumbling, and of offence unto them,
might hazzard their Converſion and fru-
te his deſigne and all his endeavours, in
ard they being alwaies inſtructed aud edu-
ed under the Law, and therefore at firſt
t weak in faith, and weak in knowledge of
Goſpel, and not yet well underſtanding
ir Chriſtian liberty *viz.* that they were by
riſt freed from the Ceremonies of the law,
had ſtill ſome hankering after thoſe things,
ereunto they had been ſo long inured;
ng hardly perſwaded therefore, but that
y were under the Law ſtill: therefore Saint
l the better to work them off, takes on
n to be under the Law too, condeſcending
o that their weakneſs, and tolerating ſome
ifferent, or triviall things amongſt them,
he could by degrees ſettle them in more

know-

knowledge of their liberty, and freedome from the ſame as will more anon appeare.

And this directly was the condition of thoſe Chriſtians at *Antioch*, and ſome in Judea, and at Jeruſalem, and the Apoſtles Inſtruction or condeſcention to them was directly the like to what is here before declared, and to what Saint *Paul* did to others alſo in the like caſe as will anon appeare.

As for theſe Chriſtians, they being lately converted to Chriſtianity, but being ſo weak, and unſetled in knowledge, and ſo ignorant of their chriſtian liberty, that they Imagined that they ought to be circumciſed after the Law of *Moſes*; ſome teaching the ſame *v.* 1. and others at Jeruſalem alſo riſeing up, and ſaying, that it was needfull to circumciſe them, and to command them to keep the law of *Moſes v.* 5. inſo much that it occaſioned great diſſention, and diſputation among them at *Antioch*, *v.* 2. and at Jeruſalem *v.* 7. & therefore it was very requiſite, that ſome courſe ſhould be taken, and ſome *Medium* uſed to compoſe and determine the difference, and to reconcile the Churches.

Now we find that the Apoſtles after conſultation, had a diſputation about this matter, although they endeavoured to take them off the Ceremoniall Law, and off Circumciſion being one part thereof, after which ſome of theſe late

late Converts had a hankering minde, as appeareth *v.* 5. yet becauſe they would not too much croſs them in their way (ſeeing they were believers) whereby they might have been an occaſion of offence, and ſtumbling unto thoſe weak bethren; which S. *Paul* utterly forbiddeth *Rom.* 14. &c. as we ſhall heare anon, but rather as deſireous to gaine upon them by degrees, and by degrees to build them up in the faith, and knowledge of the Truth, and to preſerve Chriſtian concord among them; therefore they would not at the firſt wholly debarre them, and utterly exclude them from all obſervations of the ceremoniall Law, but thought it good rather (according to *Pauls* directions elſwhere, as hereafter will appeare) in ſome indifferent things to condeſcend unto them, and to ſend them their inſtructions to that purpoſe: and therefore according to the Apoſtle *James* his motion v. 20. *they with joynt conſent reſolve* v. 22. and accordingly declare v. 28. *It ſeemed good to the Holy Ghoſt and to us* --- v. 29 *That yee abſtaine &c.* ſo that this Action of the Apoſtles proves not any univerſall binding precept to all Chriſtians under the Goſpell to be univerſally obſerved for ever, but onely a condeſcention *pro tempore* to thoſe weake Chriſtians, leaſt eating thoſe meats againſt their conſcience, their conſcience thereby ſhould

be defiled (of which more hereafter) and to keep those dissenting brethren in Christian concord towards one another.

And therefore judicious *Calvin* upon the 29. verse saith *Nihil minus Apostolis in animo fuisse quam perpetuam figere legem, qua obstrictos haberent fideles;* That it was the least of the Apostles thought or intention, to establish a perpetuall Law, wherewith to binde Believers. *Quid igitur, nempe quod fruende inter ecclesias fraterna pacis & concordiæ aptum erat remedium, adhibent, ut se ad tempus accommodent Gentes Judæis.* What then? verily they take that course, which was a fit remedy for the enjoyment of brotherly peace, and concord amongst the Churches, that the Gentiles for the time might conforme themselves to the Jewes. And againe: *Hoc certe ex dei verbo esse fatebimur, ut in rebus mediis dominetur inter nos charitas: hoc est, ut earum rerum quæ per se liberæ sunt externus usus ad charitatis regulam flectatur.* This certainely we must confess to be from the Word of God, that in things indifferent charity ought to bear sway amongst us: that is, that the externall use of those things, which in themselves are free, may stoop to the rule of charity.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

The reason of the Apostles advice to abstain from these Meats cleered from other Scriptures holding forth the necessity of weak Christians abstinence.

NEither was it *minimi de causa* or for no cause, but upon sufficient ground, and reason from other Scriptures directly agreeing herewith, that these Gentiles at *Antioch* should be commanded, and ought to abstaine from these meats if the Apostles had said nothing in this place, nor at all given any command or advice here to abstaine from the same.

For Christians that were weake in faith, and knowledge were for that their weakness debarred in other places from eating any thing, whereat they scrupled, or were offended least eating against conscience, their weak conscience thereby should be defiled, and so they might sinne by unadvised eating.

But these Gentiles &c. at *Antioch* were such weak Christians: *Ergo* they ought not to eate by reason of their weakness, least they should defile their conscience, and sin thereby.

Now for the proof of the Major proposition, that weak Christians in Faith and knowledge were in other Scriptures debarred and

therefore ought not to eat againſt their conſcience, leaſt they ſin thereby, is evident from *Rom.* 14. *ch. v.* 20. *For meats deſtroy not the work of God: All things indeed are pure; but it is evill for that man, who eateth with offence.*

Here we ſee that ſuch weak Chriſtians as are mentioned in the 1, and 2. verſes, may be deſtroyed by eating, and therefore they ought not to eat, : as alſo we ſee apparently, not onely that all things are pure and therefore lawfull to be eaten, but alſo who onely are debarred eating or may ſin thereby : *viz.* ſuch as eat with offence, It is evill for that man, who eateth with offence. Whence it is evident in what reſpect, or for what reaſon meats are at all forbidden under the Goſpell to the primitive Chriſtians *viz*, in reſpect of or by reaſon of the weakneſs of the eater, leaſt he ſin by eating againſt his conſcience, not for any impurity in the meats eaten, which to imagine indeed were great ſimplicity.

Again v. 23. *And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, becauſe he eateth not of faith, for whatſoever is not of faith is ſin.*

Here it appeareth evidently, that it is the weakneſs of faith that debarreth men from eating (this aſſeveration implying a ſtrong prohibition) and that it is the miſdoubt of ſining in that, wherein otherwiſe there is no ſin that expoſeth a man to ſin & danger becauſe he

eateth

eateth not of Faith is sin. As much as to say' if men have but so much faith as to believe that there is no impurity in the meats, no sinne in eating, they sin not thereby, but may freely eat; but if their faith be so weak, as to doubt there is sin in eating, wherein otherwise there is none, then they sin by eating, and ought therefore to abstaine.

Again look upon the *1 Cor. 8. ch. v. 7. Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge, for some with conscience of the Idols unto this houre eat it as a thing offered unto an Idol: and their conscience being weak is defiled.*

V. 10. *For if any man see thee which hast knowledge, sit at meat in the Idols Temple, shall not the Conscience of him that is weak, be emboldned to eat those things which are offered unto Idols.*

V. 11. *And through thy knowledge shall thy weak brother perish for whom Christ dyed.*

From whence we as apparently find, that that it is only the weakuesse of Christians in the knowledge of their liberty, and freedome to eat even these meats offered to Idols, that could occasion any to sin by eating, and so debarreth them from eating: when had they, but so much knowledge, as to understand, and be satisfied, that for any thing in those meats themselves, there is no impurity therein, nor sin in eating, they might safely

and warrantably eat thereof, without sinning thereby: All which evidently appeareth by this chapter, if duely weighed, as will hereafter more fully appeare.

And therefore *Petr. Martyr* on this 7. vers. saith, *Hanc rem agit Apostolus in præsentia, ut causam tollat abstinendi ab Idolothytis non in carnes Immolatitias relatas, sed in illorum Infirmitatem.* The Apostle so ordereth the matter in hand, that he reports not, or attributes not all the cause of abstaining from things offered to Idols unto the flesh, that was used to be offered, but unto their weakenesse.

And thus is the major sufficiently proved, *viz.* that it was only those primitive Christians weakness in faith to believe, there was no sin in those meats, and their weakness in knowledge to discerne their liberty to eat thereof, that might occasion them to sin by eating, and so debarred them from the same.

Now for the proof of the assumption, or Minor proposition, that these Gentiles at Antioch, and Jewish teachers there, and at Jerusalem were such weak Christians, and therefore for their weakness to be debarred from eating it is as evident: In regard they were destitute of so much knowledge, that circumcision was nothing; that they were halfe

per-

perſwaded to be circumciſed, and were fain to ſend to Jeruſalem about it *Act.* 15. 1, 2. ſo farre deſtitute of knowledge and faith to believe, that the Ceremoniall Law was abolliſhed, that it occaſioned much diſputing about it verſe 7. and deſtitute alſo they well might be of the knowledge, that an Idole, or meats offered to Idols was nothing, they were ſo lately converted from Idolatry.

All which being ſo, the concluſion muſt neceſſarily follow, that it was chiefly for this their weakneſs, that they were prohibited to eat of meats offered to Idolls, things ſtrangled and blood: leaſt by eating againſt conſcience, their weak conſcience ſhould be defiled, and ſo they ſhould ſin thereby, and not for any impurity in thoſe meats.

But that we ſhould go about hence to affirm or conclude that becauſe theſe weake Chriſtians were by reaſon of their weakneſs prohibited: leaſt their conſcience by eating ſhould be defiled, therefore ſtrong Chriſtians, that know there is no defilement therein, ſhould be prohibited alſo, were a ſtrange concluſion uterly diſſonant from all rules of reaſon whatſoevver, and ſo uterly inconſequent, and to be granted by no rationall man, yea indeed contrary to the word of God. This Tranſaction of the Apoſtles being no generall

or pepetuall command of this abſtinence to all Chriſtian Churches, but onely a temporary condeſcention to theſe weake Chriſtians at Antioch, ſo farre to obſerve the Law of Moſes although aboliſhed as to abſtaine from theſe meats according thereunto by reaſon of their weakneſs and the unwillingneſs of the Jewes to be divorſed from their ſo long practiſed ceremoniall obſervations.

CHAP. VIII.

A Scruple removed or certain Termes explained for prevention of miſtakes whereby the Text or matter in hand may the more diſtinctly be underſtood.

BUt before I proceed to the further confirmation of this ſence delivered, I have thought it not amiſs to cleer firſt ſome ſcruple that may be made, or anſwer an objection that may be raiſed againſt the ſame, for the cleerer underſtanding of mine intention, and for the avoiding all miſtakes of my Expreſsion in terming this Action of the Apoſtles, in reference to theſe meats a Condeſcenſion.

It may happily be objected; that the condeſcention in this place ſeemeth to be of the

Gentiles

Gentiles to the weak Jewes, and that this action of the Apoſtles was a command or injunction in a ſpeciall manner to theſe Gentiles, ſo to condeſcend unto the weak Jewes. And the reaſon hereof ſeemeth to be, becauſe the Gentiles did not obſerve *Moſes* Law, neither did abſtaine from theſe meats but the Jewes: and therefore leaſt the newly converted Jews, ſeeing the Gentiles eat blood, and things ſtrangled ſhould through their weakneſs be offended, from whence great difference might ariſe among the Churches: the Apoſtles to preſerve unity, and concord amongſt them, ſend this command, or injunction to theſe Gentiles, that they ſhould condeſcend to theſe weak Jewes in thoſe Ceremoniall obſervations; and ſo as it was an injunction of the Apoſtles to the Gentiles, ſo the condeſcention was of the Gentiles unto the Jewes.

To which I anſwer:

1. All that is here objected being granted, it will not thence follow, firſt that either this injunction of the Apoſtles to the Gentiles, or the Gentiles condeſcention to the Jewes was by the Apoſtles at all intended; as a preſident to all Chriſtian Churches in future Ages generally to abſtaine from thoſe meats. Secondly neither will it thence follow, that this action of the Apoſtles was not a Condeſcention, as well as an injunction to theſe very Gentiles as well as Jewes. 2. There-

2. Therefore that all mistakes may be prevented, and that these things may distinctly be understood, we must observe that these termes of condescention, injunction &c. are not *Absolutè & exclusivè dicta*, but *respectivè & κατὰ τι* and therefore must be well weighed with a *consideratis considerandis*, or in their due respects.

For *Secundum quid* or in some respect some part of this Text is no condescention at all, but a perpetual binding precept: and the rest of the Text again in some respect is a Command, or Injunction, in an other respect is a prohibition, in a third respect is a condescention, concession, or Toleration.

Thus is that part of the verse, that respecteth fornication no Condescention, but a perpetuall binding precept, and prohibition; of which more hereafter.

And for the rest of the verse, that concerneth Idolothytes, things strangled and blood: 1. For meats offered to Idols as it was a command from the Apostles, as they were Gods *messengers*, so was it also a condescention of them to those weak Gentiles to abstaine from the same, least through weakness they should by eating be defiled, as vainly imagining some pollution therein; which abstinence otherwise had been needless, as will hereafter appeare.

2. Again

2. Again in respect of the meats themselves, *viz.* in respect of those Idolothytes things strangled and blood, this action of the Apostles was a Prohibition forbidded them to eat thereof.

3. And as this command descended from the Apost. to those Gentiles, it was to those Gentles an injunction according to the objection:

4. And in that respect that those Gentiles were to follow the Jewish practice in abstaining for their sakes from things strangled, and blood; there was a condescention of the Gentiles to the Jewes, as is here objected.

5. Lastly, If we consider this transaction of the Apostles about the abstinence from these meats with respect had to the ceremoniall Law which was abolished *Eph.* 2. 15. *Col.* 2. 14. &c. and so this abstinence being a part thereof, was abolished also *Heb.* 9. 10. &c. and therefore neither was now of force, nor ought generally to be observed in the time of the Gospell: yet in respect that it is here permitted, and tolerated to these weak Christians, we can no otherwise look upon it, or conclude it in that respect, but as a condescention, Concession or Toleration from the Apostles both to those weak Jewes, and Gentiles mentioned in this chapter: The Apostles to appease the contention risen in this Church at Antioch, and by reason of those obstinate and weak

weak christians earnest bent, and propense Inclination towards the ceremonies of the Law, being fain to yeild and condescend unto them in these indifferent things by permitting, and suffering them to observe those lesse and meaner points of the Law, as the abstinence from meats although abolished by Christ, until such time as by their better understanding of their liberty they might be drawn off & weaned from the same, as beeing indeed needless and uselesse in a Christian Church; and therefore never intended by the Apostles to continue as a standing Ordinance in the same to all posterity. And in this respect *viz.* in consideration of and reference to the Ceremoniall Law it is perpicuously evident, that this Action of the Apostles may properly be termed, and must needs be a condescention, as by the serious perusall of the chapter being duely weighed it evidently appeareth.

And thus according to the severall acceptations of the verse or matter therein contained it properly falleth under the severall notions of an injunction, prohibition or condescention according, as occasion is administred in this Treatise to consider the same.

So that although in some respect this action of the Apostles seemeth an injunction; that can be no let or impediment, but that in another respect it may be a condescention.

And

And therefore the main queſtion of this whole diſcourſe being, whether this Tranſaction of the Apoſtles in reference to theſe meats were a generall and perpetuall binding precept or a Temporary condeſcention; it hath occaſioned me and I hope not improperly to treat thereof under that notion of a condeſcention, as moſt pertinent and ſuitable to the queſtion in hand, for the more cleer explication of the Text, and of the Apoſtles intention, & ſcope therein; not doubting but by what hath been already, and what yet remaineth hereafter to be delivered, it will ſatisfactorliy and convinceingly appeare to the meaneſt capacity, and moſt refractory Judgement, that here was no perpetuall command intended by the Apoſtles, but onely a temporary Condeſcention, untill the Church of Chriſt had attained unto more ſtrength, and a greater meaſure of faith, and knowledge of their Chriſtian liberty to eat of thoſe meats. And therefore to object or argue, that becauſe this action of the Apoſtles in ſome reſpect was an injunction or command, and not a condeſcention, therefore it muſt in all reſpects be ſo, is a fallacy *A dicto ſecundum quid ad dictum ſimpliciter*, which being cleared we may now proceed.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

This tranſaction of the Apoſtles further cleered to be onely a charitable condeſcention to theſe Chriſtians weakneſs by the like examples, or other inſtances of Saint Pauls like condeſcention or demeanour towards other ſuch weak Chriſtians in other places.

NEither may it ſeem ſtrange that the Apoſtles ſhould thus condeſcend unto theſe weak breathren, ὐν τύτοις τοῖς ἀδιαφόροις in theſe indifferent things, in ſuch mean matters as meats, which neither, if we eat are we the better, neither if we eat not are we the worſe 1 *Cor.* 8. 8. where the Apoſtle *Paul* to gaine Proſelytes to the faith of Chriſt, and to keep weak Chriſtians from falling off from that meaſure of faith, and that profeſſion of Chriſtianity, which they had made and attained unto, hath yeilded, and condeſcended unto farre greater and more ſtrange practices, which may ſeem farr more unwarrantable than abſtaining from meats, wherby this action of the Apoſtles will evidently appeare, and cleerly be confirmed to be no ſtanding ordinance to continue in the Church, but onely a Charitable condeſcention to theſe Chriſtians *pro tempore*, till they had gained more underſtanding

ing of their freedome to eat thereof.

To instance therefore in some particulars: thus we find the Apostle *Paul* dealing about circumcision, a matter of farre higher concernement, then this of meats, for although he peremptorily telleth the Galathians *ch.* 5. *v.* 2. *That if they were circumcised Christ should profit them nothing*, and *v.* 3. *For I testifie againe to every man that is circumcised that he is a debtor to the whole Law.* Yet notwithstanding all this in *Act.* 16. the very next chapter to this in hand, the same Apostle took *Timothy*, and circumcised him because of the Jewes, which were in those quarters *Act.* 16. 3.

Hoc dedit Apostolus Infirmitati quorundam Imbecillium Judæorum: saith Just *Jonas*. This the Apostle did for the weakness of some weak Jewes. *Ut charitate inserviret*, saith *Erasmus Sarcerius*: That he might have respect to charity. *Quare circumcisio Timothei non fuit Sacramentum, quale datum fuit Abrahæ, & ejus posteris, sed Cæremonia media & indifferens, quæ tantum ad fovendam charitatem non ad pietatis exercitium valebat.* Wherefore the Circumcision of *Timothy* was not a Sacrament such as was given to *Abraham*, and his posterity, but a middle and indifferent ceremony, which availed onely to cherish love, or charity, not to the exercise of Piety, saith *Calvin* on the place. For notwithstanding what he had

had ſaid *Gal.* 5. 2, 3. He well knew, that in Jeſus Chriſt neither circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion but faith, *v.* 6. and a new creature *ch*, 6. 15.

The like to which directly he ſpeaketh of meats, *that meat commendeth us not to God, for neither if we eat are we the better, neither if we eat not are we the worſe* 1 *Cor.*8. before cited,& therefore to pleaſe the Jewes, and the better to gain them to Chriſt, and to uphold charity, and Chriſtian concord; he circumciſeth *Timothy*, directly as the Apoſtles in ſome meaſure to pleaſe thoſe weak Gentiles at Antioch and others, and to keep correſpondency, and concord betwixt them and the Jewiſh Chriſtians, who leaned too much to Circumciſion, and the Ceremoniall Law: becauſe they denyed them circumciſion, one part of the Ceremoniall Law,therefore to gratifie them in ſome thing, they grant them another part thereof of leſs, concernment *viz.* to abſtaine from thoſe meats.

Now ſhould we not be accounted ſimple and abſurd, if we ſhould go about to argue: that becauſe the Apoſtle gave circumciſion to *Timothy*, and not as a Sacrament, but to pleaſe and to gaine upon the Jewes, therefore circumciſion ought to be embraced as a ſtanding ordinance to the Chriſtian Church, againſt which the Apoſtle hath ſo flatly, and directly

rectly declared *Gal.* 5. *&c.* as abolished by Christ?

And how can it be but as grosly absurd, to Argue that because the Apostles for the very same causes, *viz.* to gaine them to, and hold them in a Christian course, and concord, made a concession to these weake Christians, to abstaine from things strangled and blood; therefore the same was intended, as a generall Command to continue in all Christian Churches under the Gospell, which thing so many cleer texts of Scripture before urged, do by good consequence so flatly contradict?

Againe another like instance in Saint *Paul* we find *Act.* 18. 18. In his shaving his head in *Cenchrea:* for he had made a vow; which being a ceremoniall practise approved of by God *Numb.* 6. None sure will be so simple, as to imagine that Saint *Paul* did it either in obedience to the ceremoniall Law, which all men know to be abolished, or that the same should be any President for the future practise of the Church, but onely according to the learned: *Ne qui adhuc ex Judæis, ad quos venturus erat, infirmi erant, illum Legis inimicum (ut vulgo ferebatur) existimarent, & ut eis rudibus, nec dum rite edoctis se accommodaret, vel ut infirmos Christo adduceret, saltem ne eos offenderet, idcirco Paulum voto se obligasse, quod sciebat coram Deo nullius esse momenti:*

Leaſt they who of the Jewes, to whom he was to come, were as yet but weak, ſhould think him an enemy to the Law (as he was vulgarly reported to be) and that he might conform himſelfe to them being ignorant, and not as yet rightly inſtructed, or that he might draw weake ones to Chriſt, at leaſtwiſe that he might not offend them: therefore that *Paul* bound himſelf with a vow, which he knew to be of no moment in the ſight of God.

Thus we ſee by theſe examples of the Apoſtle *Paul*, how to favour weak Chriſtians infirmity, to preſerve Chriſtian charity, and that they might not offend, but the better work upon ſuch late Converts, as were weak in faith, and knowledge, the Apoſtles ſometimes yeilded, & condeſcended to ſome practices in things indifferent, which they never intended to eſtabliſh, or ſettle, as ſtanding Ordinances, or to remaine as perpetuall binding precepts to the Church: which thing will alſo yet farther appeare in the following chapter.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

Another example or instance yet given of Saint Pauls farther Condescention, or like demeanour towards the Jewes, cleering this of the Apostles towards the Gentiles.

AGaine it most evidently illustrateth, and cleereth the matter in hand, if we observe how S. *Paul* was induced and perswaded by the brethren of Jerusalem to prepare himself to keep the Law of Moses, even to the offering of Sacrifice *Act.* 21. 26, 27. which he well knowing to be frivolous, and of no force, yet notwithstanding readily puts the same in practice, onely to satisfie the perverseness and condescend unto the weakness of these late Jewish converts and to keep them from Apostatizing, and falling off from their profession of Christianity; which they might have done, should he on the sudden have croſt them in their way, and not by degrees have attempted to take them off their old Customes and Jewish Ceremonies: yet with no intent to make this action any president or example at all for any future imitation: where likewise we shall cleerly see this very condescention made to the Gentiles *Act.* 15. againe repeated, as well as this made to the Jews declared,

clared, and the difference betwixt them, as appeareth by the ſtory at large *Act.* 21. 20. *And when they heard it they glorified the Lord and ſaid unto him, thou ſeeſt brother how many thouſands of Jews there are which believe, and they are all zealous of the Law.*

Here we ſee how much bent, and fixed theſe late believers were upon the ceremoniall Law, from which it was a matter of difficultie, but by this pollicy to reclaim them: there being alſo an other obſtruction in the next verſe to hinder them from liſtning to Saint *Pauls* doctrine, *viz.* v. 21. *And they are informed of thee, that thou teacheſt all the Jewes which are among the Gentiles to forſake Moſes, ſaying, that they ought not to circumciſe their children, neither to walk after their cuſtomes.*

Hitherto is the ſcruple that troubled theſe weak Chriſtians wherein they were to be ſatisfied by the Apoſtles complying with them, or the ground layed or reaſon alledged by the brethren, wherefore the Apoſtle muſt comply with, and condeſcend unto them. Next followeth the warning given to Saint *Paul* of of the peoples purpoſe to heare him v. 22. *What is it therefore? the multitude muſt needs come together: for they will heare that thou art come.*

Then followeth the brethrens Councell to Saint *Paul*, what to do, and how to carry himſelf

himself towards the Multitude *pro servandæ ecclesiæ pace; to preserve the peace of the Church,* saith *Erasm. Sar.* by complying with them, to qualifie them, and satisfie them, that he might the better hold them in their profession, and that they fall not of from the Gospell, and reject both the Apostle and his doctrine.

V. 23. *Do therefore this that we say unto thee: we have four men, which have a vow on them;*

V. 24. *Them take and purifie thy selfe with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads; and all may know that those things whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing but that thou thy self also walkest orderly, and keepest the Law.*

Here we see farre stranger things, farr greater matters propounded unto the Apostle *Paul*, wherein he became indulgent unto the humours of these Jewish Converts, than those were which the Apostles granted nnto the Gentiles: *Et tamen Paulus eorum consilio acquievit, & illis placere voluit in bonum ad ædificationē pro conservanda ecclesiæ concordia,* as *Brentius* saith, and yet *Paul* followed their advice, and was willing to please them for good unto edification for the conservation of Concord in the Church.

Then the Apostle *James*, and the Elders use a motive to encourage *Paul*, and to satisfie him, and themselves in their own mindes

that notwithſtanding they do thus deſcend to the Jewes to hold them on in their profeſſion of Chriſt, ſeeing it will no otherwiſe be, but that they muſt comply thus with them in the obſervation of thoſe legall Ceremonies, leaſt they ſhould fall off; yet they may do this ſafely and without any ſuſpition of their own Inclining to, or ſetting up again the ceremoniall Law, as knowing themſelves free from the ſame: In regard when the Gentiles through the inſtigation of ſome Jewes ſtood upon circumciſion and the Law of *Moſes*, they had yeilded or condeſcended to no ſuch thing to them, but onely that they ſhould abſtaine from thoſe meats &c.

V. 25. *As touching the Gentiles, which believe, we have written, and concluded that they keep themſelves from things offered to Idols and blood, from things ſtrangled & from fornication.*

With which condeſcention in thoſe meaner and inferiour things they knew thoſe Gentile ſinners would be ſatisfied and held on in their profeſſion of Chriſtianity, when this Condeſcention to theſe Jewes muſt be the greater and the larger in theſe Ceremoniall obſervations, to keep them to Chriſt, in regard they had ever been trained up therein, and therefore not ſuddenly, but by degrees to be weaned and divorced from them.

Hereby then we ſee perſpicuouſly, that as this

this was onely a conceſſion of the Jewes ſo the other in *Act.* 15. was and could no otherwiſe be, but onely a conceſſion, or condeſcention to thoſe Gentiles, being diſcreetly fitted, and proportioned to each, according as their ſeverall conditions did require. According to which councell and advice to the Brethren in v. 24. the Apoſtle *Paul* readily addreſſeth himſelf to put the ſame in execution.

V. 26. *Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himſelf with them entred into the Temple, to ſignifie the Accompliſhment of the dayes of purification, untill that an offering ſhould be offered for every one of them.* v. 27. *And when the ſeaven dayes were almoſt ended the Jewes which were of Aſia, when they ſaw him in the Temple ſtirred up all the People &c.*

No marvell that the Apoſtles made that Syncoreſis unto thoſe Chriſtians at Antioch, *in rebus tam mediis & indifferentibus*, in ſo mean, and Indifferent things: when we ſee the Apoſtle *Paul* here performe ſuch an extraordinarie indulgence unto the Jewiſh chriſtians at Jeruſalem, in obſerving exactly ſo many, and ſo high parts of the Ceremonial Law, all which he knew to be aboliſhed, and all this to pleaſe, and paciſie the peeviſh humours of thoſe late Believers: That as *Pomeranus* obſerveth upon *v.* 26. *Sine pertinaciâ cæremonias Legis hac in parte obſervat, nihil-*

que earumque rerum omittit, quas lex definivit: idque facit non clam, sed palam; omnibus conspicuus purificat se publice, ingreditur templum, & ibi publice indicat & palam testatur se minime legis hostem: Without reluctance he observeth in this part the ceremonies of the Law and omitteth nothing of those things, which the Law required: and that he doth not privately but publickly: in the sight of all he purifieth himselfe publickly, entreth the Temple, and there publickly declareth, and openly testifieth, that he is no enemy to the Law at all, the manner of performing all which we may read at large *Numb. 6. Et hac parte divini cultus*, saith *Calvin, Indifferenter defungi licuit: modo id non religionis causa fieret, sed tantum ad infirmos sublevandos.* And this part of divine worship it was lawfull for the Apostle indifferently to performe: so it were not done for religion sake but onely to support the weake.

And thus by this and the like practices was the Apostle made all things to all men, that he might by all means save some. Thus to the Jewes (hereby) he became as a Jew, that he might gain the Jewes (and so) to them that were under the Law, that he might gaine them that were under the Law. (thus hereby to these being) weak became he as weak, that he might gaine (them being) weake. 1 *Cor. 9.* 20, 22.

Now

Now is there any probability or will any be ſo ſottiſh, as to imagine this tranſaction of the Apoſtles, and Elders in this 21. *ch.* to be with any intention at all to ſet up againe, or continue theſe rights of the Ceremoniall Law to theſe Chriſtian Jewes in future ages under the Goſpell as a generall practice, or ſtanding ordinance to continue in the Church?

Neither can it by any rationall man be concluded, that that Tranſaction in *Act.* 15. was at all intended, to ſettle any ſtanding ordinance to continue in future ages among the Gentiles to abſtaine from meats: which the meaneſt judgement cannot chooſe but know to be altogether uſeleſſe.

For if this to Jewes were a Condeſcention only: That to the Gentiles muſt be ſo alſo:

But the antecedent is true: Therefore the Conſequent.

Thus by this time I hope it doth appeare ſufficiently cleere, and manifeſt, that thoſe Texts in *Act.* 15. as farre as concerneth Idolothytes things ſtrangled and blood were as they were intended, onely as a Condeſcention, Conceſsion, or Toleration in theſe Indifferent things to thoſe Gentile and Jewiſh Chriſtians by reaſon of their weakneſs, and the better to prevaile with them, and to preſerve peace in the Churches: and not at all intended, as a perpetuall

perpetuall binding precept to all Christians, to abstaine from those meats.

CHAP. XI.

This Condescention of the Apostles confirmed, as being found consistent with severall Commands given, to condescend to weake Christians in abstaining from meats, for giving offence.

YEt for more full confirmation of the matter in hand, we shall in this and some chapters following finde these condescentions of the Apostles in these indifferent things, agreeable to severall commands, requiring the like charitable carriage towards Christians, who being but late converts unto Christ, are but weak in faith, and knowledge; whereby it will be cleerly evidenced, not onely that Christians may lawfully eate of all sorts of meats, yea of things offered to Idols, much more of things strangled and blood; but also that the true, and genuine sence, meaning and intention of the Apostles herein cannot be as these opinionists misapprehend the same, nor any otherwise, then is here delivered, *viz.* as a concession to weak Christians to avoid offence, &c.

Severall

Severall ſuch Commands requiring this reſpect, and condeſcention to weak Chriſtians we find *Rom.* 14. *ch.*

V. 1. *Him that is weake in the faith receive you, but not to doubtfull diſputations.*

V. 2. *For one believeth, that he may eat all things: another who is weake eateth herbes.*

V. 3. *Let not him that eateth deſpiſe him that eateth not &c.*

Here we ſee already the Apoſtle prohibiting any to ſet themſelves againſt ſuch weak Chriſtians, as in the primitive times were not well grounded, or ſettled in the faith; and admoniſhing, that ſtrong Chriſtians, who had ſufficient knowledge of their freedome to eat all ſorts of meats, yet ſhould ſo much favour ſuch weak Chriſtians, who through weakneſs of faith ſcrupled, or refuſed to eate, that notwitſtanding their weakneſs they ſhould receive them, and not deſpiſe them, that did not eat.

And therefore *Calvin* thus briefly comprizeth this whole chapter *Summa eorum, quæ hoc toto capite tractat, huc redit; ut qui robuſtiores ſunt operam impendant, infirmis ſubleuandis, & qui magis profecerunt ſufferendis rudibus.* The ſumme of thoſe things which (the Apoſtle) handleth in this whole chapter cometh to thus much, That they, who are more ſtrong, beſtow their endeavour in ſupporting the weak, and they which have been

greater

us, and take heed least by our actions we lay a stumbling blook in our brothers way, for then an offence is given, or then we lay a stumbling block when any thing is committed by us either in doctrine, or manners, whereby the conscience of another may be moved to fall off from the doctrine, or Religion once received, or at leastwise to esteem of it, less then before.

Was it not then upon good ground, that the Apostles condescended to those weake Christians at Antioch? No marvell, these things considered, that the Apostles knowing the weak condition of those believers were so carefull to make that condescention unto them, for giving them offence, seeing their practise or Carriage towards them was no more then what was agreeable to the Word of God in other Scriptures, and was in effect by the Apostle *Paul* in this chapter, required, and which indeed as appeareth by this chapt. and other places of Scripture, ought *ex officio* to have been done by the Apostles, as most requisite and necessary to those weake Christians, least they should give them offence, and this without the least impeachment of their Establishing any generall and perpetuall ordinance in the Church, for if such as are weak in the faith ought not to be despised but received v. 1. & no man out to put a stumbling block

or

or an occasion of offence in his brothers way *v.* 13. yea if a man ought neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby his Brother stumbleth, or is offended or is made weake v. 21. Great reason had the Apostles to do, what they did; and as great sure was their discretion, and apparently acted indeed by the Holy-Ghost, that so directly according hereunto, notwithstanding the errour of those weake Christians in adhereing to the Law of *Moses*, yet they should not despise them, but receive them, and partly upon their own termes, and that they might not put any stumbling block or occasion to fall in their way, so charitably should condescend unto them in these indifferent things: as well knowing that they might stumble or be offended, or made weake, should they either utterly deny them in all the ceremonies of the Law, or else permit them to eat those meats which might defile them; should they eat the same against their conscience, which they were in danger to doe, had not they been restrained, in regard of their great inclination to the Law, which was obtruded upon them by those Jewish Teachers.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

The whole matter in hand cleared in each particular from 1 *Cor.* 10. *ch.*

NOw in the next place seeing the same prohibition standeth in the same equall force against things offered to Idols in this 15. of *Act.* as it doth against things strangled and blood: therefore I hope it will not as indeed it cannot in any reason be denyed, but if we can in any place prove it in any sence lawfull to eat things offered to Idols, it must needs be granted in the same sence, as lawfull to eat things strangled, and blood: which in the next place we doubt not evidently to prove from 1 *Cor.* 10. *ch.* from whence for the more full confirmation of all that hath formerly been delivered, we shall finde the whole matter in question fully and evidently illustrated in each particular, *viz.* we shall see it manifest.

1. That all meats for any thing in themselves may lawfully be eaten.

2. In what respect we are commanded to abstaine from Idolothytes, and so of the rest.

3. It will follow that in that respect onely this abstinence in *Act.* 15. was intended, and com-

commanded by the Apoſtles and all this from 1 *Cor. ch.* 27, 28, 29. verſes.

For the 1. particular, after the Apoſtle had ſaid v. 25. whatſoever is ſold in the ſhambles, that eat, asking no queſtion for conſcience ſake, which were warrant ſufficient to ſatisfie any man of his liberty to eat of any meats without ſcruple of conſcience: yet to put all paſt any exception or objection he addeth *v.* 27. *If any of them that believe not bid you to a feaſt, and ye be diſpoſed to go, whatſoever is ſet before you eat, asking no queſtion for conſcience ſake.*

Here we ſee free liberty granted, or a command given to eat of all manner of meats, whatſoever is ſet before us. The Originall is Πᾶν τὸ παρατιθέμενον ὑμῖν ἐσθίετε: Every thing that is ſet before you eat: nay they muſt not ſo much as make any queſtion about it: what can be more clear? μηδὲν ἀνακρίνοντες: *Verbum quo Paulus utitur* (ſaith *Calvin*) *ſignificat ratiocinari in utramque partem: Ita ut mens hominis alternet, nunc huc nunc illuc inclinans.* διὰ τὴν συνείδησιν, *hoc eſt* (ſaith *Calvin*) *coram Dei Tribunali, quatenus tibi negotium eſt cum Deo, non eſt quod tecum diſputes liceat necne, ſecurus enim quibuſlibet veſci potes: quia tibi omnia dominus abſque exceptione concedit.* For conſcience ſake that is before Gods tribunall. as far as thou haſt to do with

God, thou needst not dispute the matter with thy self, whether it be lawful or not, for thou maist safely eat what thou wilt because the Lord granteth thee all things without exception. Yea even meats offered to Idols may we lawfully & without scruple of conscience eat, as the following context cleerly sheweth.

For in v. 28. the Apostle saith; But if any man say unto you, this is offered in sacrifice unto Idols, eat not &c. Here it is cleer that this very particular thing by name εἰδωλόθυτον mentioned in Act. 15. 29. as prohibited, is here mentioned as one sort of the meats set before these Christian Corinthians, which they were in the former verse commanded to eat (unlesse some other scrupled at it, as is cleer by the two verses compared) and not so much as to aske any question about it for conscience sake.

And therefore it must needs be concluded lawfull to eat even meats offered to Idols.

1. Because Idolothytes are one sort of meats set before them, which they were commanded to eat: as appeareth by the 27, and 28. verses compared.

2. Because by the sequell it is the Concience onely of him that scruples, and not the other; *viz.* his sake that shewed it, that must be the let or hindrance in eating those meats offered to Idols as appeareth plain by *v.* 28, 29. But

if

If any man say unto you this is offered in sacifice unto Idols eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake --- Conscience I say not thine own, but of the others, As if the Apostle had said, if no man scruple at the eating of those meats thou maist lawfully eat them, but it any man scruple, eat them not. And therefore it must be meant of those very meats offered to Idols, as lawfull to be eaten.

3. Because that liberty mentioned in the very next words (*viz.* in the latter part of the 29. verse; *for why is my liberty Judged of another mans conscience*) is plainely meant to be in these meats offered unto Idols, as well as any other meats: and therefore these meats may lawfully be eaten.

Wherefore *Marlorat* on this place speaking of Idolothytes saith, that the simple sence of the place is: *Non Jubeo te abstinere, quasi putes illa non esse tua: : Nam quum terra sit domini, ta etiam ad te pertinent: sed alia causa te prohibeo edere propter eum (inquam) qui tibi indicavit.* I command thee not to abstaine, as if thou shouldest imagine those (meats offered to Idols) were not thine: for seeing the earth is the Lords, those things also belong unto thee: but it is for another cause, that I prohibit thee to eat, because of him I say, who shewed it to thee.

Now then if these meats offered to Idols

lawfully may, and ought to be eaten, as here plainly appeareth, which were in *Act.* 15. as ſtrongly forbidden as things ſtrangled, and Blood: then by a cleer Argument *à Majori ad minus* may things ſtrangled and meats made of or mixt with blood in the ſame ſence as the other, or upon the ſame account be without all doubt or queſtion as lawfully eaten alſo.

2. for the ſecond particular we ſee cleerly out of theſe verſes, that notwithſtanding this command here to eat of meats offered to Idols, or free liberty to do the ſame: yet there is a cleer Condeſcention to the weakneſs of any, that ſhall ſcruple here commanded alſo, or a prohibition ſhewing in what caſe they ought not to eat, *viz.* in caſe of any ſcrupulous nicity of a weak Chriſtian: But if any man ſay unto you this is offered in ſacrifice unto Idols, eat not: and the cauſe why they muſt then abſtaine is added *viz.* for his ſake that ſhewed it, and for his conſcience onely: As if the Apoſtle had ſaid, although for any matter of conſcience in your ſelves ye may lawfully eat of meats offered to Idols, having free liberty to do the ſame: yet if any weake chriſtian ſcruple as conceiting ſome ſinfulneſs in eating things ſacrificed unto Idols, when there is none: then ye ought to have ſo much Chriſtian charity towards ſuch as to forbear, rather then by eating to give offence, or by your example

ample to draw any to eat against his conscience, whereby his conscience by eating may be defiled.

3. For the third particular, as these Texts sufficiently cleer up the point in what respects we are commanded to eat, and in what respects to abstaine from eating these meats sacrificed to Idols *viz.* in respect of our own conscience, or for any matter of religion, or piety men may eat without offence; and yet if any weak Christian stumble at it as conjecturing any ill therein, in that respect, or in point of charity they ought to forbeare; onely to condescend unto or comply with their weakness that they might not offend or discourage them in their profession of Christianity, untill their better knowledge of their lawfullness to eat thereof do give them better satisfaction: so I hope by this time the matter is put past dispute, that the Apostles practice as in other places before declared, so in *Act.* 15. was onely according to this command to condescend and in some measure to comply with the weaknes of those Christians at Antioch, the better to continue them in their profession without stumbling or offence, til their better strength in faith, and knowledge could afford them more abillity to discerne the truth of this their Christian liberty, and that the true and

genuine ſence, intention, and meaning of that place was onely to this and to no other end or purpoſe: *viz*; not in the leaſt meaſure intended, to continue, as a ſtanding Ordinance, or generall binding precept to all chriſtians under the Goſpell without any diſtinction, or reſpect had to perſons, or conditions to abſtain from any of thoſe kinds of meats.

CHAP. XIII.

All the aforeſaid particulars againe fully cleered from 1 *Cor.* 8. *ch.*

AND now although there hath been ſufficient ſaid in vindication of thoſe Texts in *Act.* 15. from the Antipedobaptiſts miſinterpretation thereof, and to ſet forth the true ſence and meaning of the ſame: yet to put all out of doubt, and to cleer all which hath been ſaid, I ſhall yet repeat one portion of Scripture for full ſatisfaction *viz.*

1 *Cor.* 8. *chap. v.* 1. *Now as touching things offered to Idols we know that we all have knowledge* --- Now what is this knowledge? Is it that we ought not to eat thereof? no queſtionleſs: but the contrary as appeareth v. 4. *As concerning therefore the eating of thoſe things, that are offered in ſacrifice unto Idols*

we

we know that an Idole is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. So alſo v. 6.

Here is ſufficient ſaid already to cleer the point: for if an Idol is nothing, then to things offered to Idols can be nothing alſo; and this is that knowledge, which the Apoſtle meaneth.

As if he had ſaid the very conſideration, that there is but one God, and that an Idol is nothing in the world, is ſufficient to inſtruct us with this knowledge, that it is not the eating or abſtaining from meats though offered to Idols, wheby we can performe ſervice to God; for they well knew, that God is a ſpirit and he will be ſerved in *ſpirit and in truth*, *Joh.* 4. 24. *It is ſpirituall ſervice, by a ſaving faith in Chriſt*, *Joh.* 6. 35, 40, 47. *by lifting up our ſouls dayly unto God in prayers, prayſes, and Ejaculations* 1 *Theſ.* 5. 17, 18. and by doing to men no otherwiſe than we would that that they ſhould do to us *Luk.* 6. 31. (*for this is the whole duty of man*, *Mat.* 22. 36, to 41.) whereby we muſt endeavour to ſerve, and pleaſe him, and to obtaine life and ſalvation, and not by the eating or abſtaining from meats as if the Apoſtle, I ſay or thoſe Corinthians had ſaid, this is that knowledge, that we have; *But meat commendeth us not to God, for neither if we eat are we the better, neither*

neither if we eat not are we the worſe, verſe 8:

And ſure it is a ſottiſh ſimplicity for any to imagine otherwiſe, and a ſtrange deluſion Satan that rationall men, eſpecially Chriſtians ſhould be poſſeſt with ſo fond an opinion, that men ſhould be better or worſe in the ſight of God for eating or not eating meats under the Goſpell, which (as the Apoſtle ſaith Idols are nothing,) ſo muſt likewiſe be nothing, ſeeing they periſh in the uſeing, and cannot commend us unto God.

And therefore *Calvin* on that 4. verſe ſaith, that the knowledge meant there by the Apoſtle of thoſe Corinthians was, *Idolum inane eſſe humani cerebri figmentum, ideoque pro nihilo reputandum eſſe: proinde conſecrationem quæ fit Idoli nomine ſtultam eſſe imaginationem, & nullius momenti: non pollui igitur hominem Chriſtianum, qui abſque Idoli Religione Idolothytis veſcatur*: That an Idole was but the vain figment of a humane braine, and therefore to be reputed for nothing: and that for that cauſe of Devotion, which is made in the name of an Idol, is but a fooliſh imagination, and of no moment: and therefore that a Chriſtian man is not polluted, who without adoration of the Idole, eateth meats offered unto Idoles.

But it is here to be noted out of this 8. *v.* compared with the 7. v. and the verſes before

fore alſo that Idolothytes being the Apoſtles chief ſubject of diſcourſe in this Chapter is chiefly the meat, which the Apoſtle in this 8. verſe ſpeaketh of, as not commending us to God by the eating or not eating of the ſame. from whence and from the reſt of this chapter we may behold the whole matter in queſtion in its ſeverall particulars cleerly held forth unto us.

V. 7. *Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge; for ſome with conſcience of the Idol unto this hour eat it, as a thing offered unto an Idol, and their Conſcience being weak, is defiled.*

V. 8. *But meat commendeth us not to God &c.* (as before cited.)

V. 9. *But take heed leaſt by any means leaſt this liberty of your become a ſtumbling block to them that are weak.*

V. 10. *For if any man ſeee thee which haſt knowledge ſit at meat in the Idol Temple, ſhall not the conſcience of him that is weake be emboldned to eat thoſe things, which are offered to Idols:*

V. 11. *And through thy knowledge ſhall the weak brother periſh, for whom Chriſt dyed.*

V. 12. *But when ye ſin ſo againſt the brethren and wound their weak conſcience, ye ſin againſt Chriſt.*

V. 13. *Wherefore if meat make thy brother to offend*

offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth least I make my brother to offend.

From all which we may evidently collect these particulars:

1. That it is lawfull to eat things offered to Idols.

1. Because there is free liberty to do the same as appeareth v. 9.

2. Because there are some who knowing that an Idol is nothing v. 4. are allowed to sit at meat in the Idols Temple *v.* 10.

3. Because it is through the knowledge of some, who may therefore eat without any Checks of conscience, that other weak Christians being emboldned, defile their conscience: *v.* 10, 11.

Therefore it is, cleerly against Scripture, as reason to deny such as are sound in the faith, liberty to eat even things offered to Idols. And if we have liberty to eat of those meats, much more of things strangled or made of blood.

Secondly, So that the second conclusion, that we may cleerly collect from this chapter is: that the true sence of that place in *Act.* 15. cannot be a perpetuall binding precept to all Christians under the Gospell to abstaine from meats offered to Idols &c. But that these opinionists misinterpretation thereof, so is hereby cleerly over thrown: because those

those that have knowledge may lawfully eat,

Thirdly as it hereby appeareth, what is not the sence of that place so it is as cleer from sence: what is the the true sence thereof: *viz.* A charitable condescention to weak Christians, that they became not an offence unto them: because the same is here cleerly commanded *v.* 9, 10, 11, 12, 13. before cited.

And therefore *Seb. Meyer* on v. 13. saith *Concludit ex dictis suo exemplo, ob fratrum infirmorum charitatem ne dum Idolothytis sed etiam carnibus in universum (quibus alias vesci licet esse abstinendum.* He (*viz.* the Apostle) concludeth out of what he had said before with his own example, that for charity sake towards weak brethren men ought to abstaine, not onely from things offered to Idols, but also from all kindes of flesh (which otherwise it is lawfull for them to eat.)

In a word, the summe of all that may be concluded from this chapter is this *viz.* That there is a sence wherein those primitive Christians might lawfully eat those meats, that is to say those that are strong in faith, and had knowledge might lawfully eat thereof, if they thereby gave no offence to weak Christians: and in this sence it was not the least intention of the Apostles in that 15. of the Act: to command any such to abstaine from those meats, nor any true or genuine sence or scope

of

of the place. And againe there is a ſence wherein weak Chriſtians might forbeare, to wit, by reaſon of their weakneſs; yea and ſtrong Chriſtians ought to forbeare, leaſt they ſinned againſt Chriſt, that they might condeſcend to ſuch Chriſtians weakneſs: leaſt by their eating they cauſed them to ſinne by preſuming upon their example againſt their conſcience to do the like.

And therefore Calvin on the 10. verſe ſaith, *Utitur Apoſtolus conceſſione, ac ſi diceret: eſto: tu ſcientiam habeas: ſed qui te videt etiamſi nulla præditus ſit cognitione, tuo exempli confirmatus ad idem audendum: ſine authore vero nunquam eo progreſſus foret. Nunc ubi habet quem imitetur ſatis in imitatione excuſationis habere ſe putat, quum tamen agat mala conſcientia.* The Apoſtle uſeth a conceſſion, as if he ſhould ſay, be it ſo that thou haſt knowledge: yet he which ſeeth thee, although he be indued with no knowledge, will be emboldned by thy example to attempt the ſame thing: when without ſome preſident he would never go on ſo farre, But now he hath one whom he may imitate, he thinketh that he hath a ſufficient excuſe, when neverthe leſs he may do it with an evill conſcience.

Aud for this cauſe, or in this ſence it muſt then be, that the Apoſtles condeſcended in theſe indifferent things to thoſe weak Chriſtians

stians at Antioch, to draw them by degrees from the ceremoniall Law, whereunto they so much adhered, least if they should eat thereof against their conscience, their conscience thereby might be defiled. And all this doth this 1 *Cor.* 8. *ch.* hold forth unto us.

CHAP. XIIII.

A direct method, or orderly proceeding leading to the true sence or scope, and right understanding of the place, by a collection from the premises in what sence, or in what respect it was lawfull to eat those meats, and in what unlawfull: with a discovery of the rashness of Schismaticall spirits in broaching new doctrines.

NOw there being one sence put upon that place in *Act.* 15. which is directly contrary to the Word of God in other Scriptures: and another sence thereof by comparing it with other Scriptures: is directly agreeable & consentaneous thereunto: The Question is, whether sence ought to be taken, as the true, and proper sence and meaning of the place.

Will any be so simply peevish or perverse as to imagine, or offer to maintain, that to be the true sence, which is flatly contradicted by so many other Scriptures, and

that

that to be the false or wrong sence, which so directly agreeth not only with the severall commandes, but also with the very practise of the Apostles in so many places: *Quis hec antea fando audivit?* What is this but to assert *Candida de nigris, & de candentibus atra:* to affirm darkness to be light, and light darkness: to choose tinne for silver and to affirm that copper is Gold: to take truth for falsehood, and to say that falsehod is truth?

Seeing then that in some respects we finde it lawfull by the word of God, and in other respects unlawfull to eat even of meats offered to Idols, yea seeing the Scripture doth evidently distinguish and declare what those severall respects are *viz.* In what respect primitive Christians ought to eat, and in what respect they ought to abstaine from eating those meats: none sure will be so willfully obstinate as to contradict the Word of God (unless Antiscripturists, that ought to be hist out of all Christian society) but will be willing to be directed by the Word, and to distinguish, as it distinguisheth to allow those Christians liberty to eat, as it alloweth, and to restraine them onely as it restraineth: and as not to allow them, where the Scripture restraineth them; so not to restraine them where the Scripture alloweth: For this were willfully to oppose, and contradict the Word of God.

Now

Now the Word of God or the Holy-Ghost by the ſame in this 15. of the *Act.* holdeth forth a command to abſtaine from things offered to Idols; and in the 1 *Cor.* 8. 4, 9, 10. and *ch.* 10. 27, 28, 29. before cited is free liberty granted to eat things offered to Idols; theſe Scriptures ſeeming to contradict one another, now what is to be done herein or how ſhall we know which Scripture to follow? ſhall we raſhly take up with the firſt Scripture we meet with, and put the ſame in practice according to the letter without any more adoe, declaring it preſently to be a generall and perpetuall binding precept to all Chriſtians under the Goſpell; without once conſidering or regarding the matter in hand in its nature or diſtinctions, or to ſearch out the intention or drift of the Holy Ghoſt, in the place or to compare it with other Scriptures to ſee that no other portion of Scripture oppoſe the ſame, but haſtily raiſe a concluſion of our own heads and deviſeing, and ſay we are inſpired by the Holy Ghoſt, and need no humane learning to help us! For we know and underſtand the Scripture better then the Divines that have ſtudyed it all their lives: is this all we have to do, before we broach new Tenents & breed diviſions in the Church, and afterwards muſt look for cavills to maintaine ſuch upſtart opinions and new deviſed

doctrine

doctrines withall? And doubtleſs were not this the courſe and all the care that Schiſmaticall ſpirits take before they vent their fancies to the world, it were Impoſſible, that ſo many erroneous opinions, and unſound Doctrines ſhould ſwarme abroad to perplex peoples mindes.

But to returne: is not this the courſe, as more direct rationall and ſolid, that ought to be taken for the right underſtanding, as of other places, ſo of this in *Act.* 15.

Here we finde a command to abſtaine from meats offered unto Idols &c. about which happily we are ſomewhat diſſatisfied. Now we know the generall practiſe of the Reformed Churches is to eat all manner of meats, as accounting them lawfull in point of conſcience, or for matter of Religion without exception of any.

Now the firſt thing to be done, if it be but in point of Civill diſcretion, is not eaſily to reject or be drawn off the Churches practice, unleſſe we finde ſufficient ground, or reaſon for the ſame: which that we may try;

The ſecond thing is to ſearch the Scripture to ſee how we find other Scriptures conſenting with, or diſſenting from the ſame.

Now after ſmall ſearch we finde, as variety of Scriptures all before cited allowing, and commanding to eat of all meats ſo in 1 *Cor.* 8. 4, 9, 10.

4, 9, 10. and in 1 *Cor.* 10. 27, 28, 29. before cited, we ſee liberty granted to eat thoſe very meats in particular offered to Idols, which were in the former place forbidden: Hence perceiving a ſeeming contradiction between Scripture, and Scripture, it is a ſufficient caveat to adviſe us, not to be too raſh in any prejudicate opinion, before theſe Scriptures be reconciled, and rightly underſtood.

The third thing therefore to be done will be to weigh well, and conſider what is the drift, or intention of the Holy Ghoſt, or main ſcope of thoſe diſſonant places: which muſt occaſion us to find a diſtinction, in what ſence meats are commanded in ſome places, and forbidden in other: for we may (I hope) warrantably and infallibly conclude, that in that ſence, that thoſe meats are commanded in other Scriptures, in that ſence the Apoſtles contradict not the eating thereof in that place of *Act.* 15. and in that ſence, that thoſe meats are in other places forbidden, or allowed to be abſtained from, in that, and in no other ſence muſt it be, that thoſe Chriſtians at Antioch are forbidden to eat thereof; or according to thoſe precepts or examples of the Apoſtles in other places muſt this precept in this place iſſue forth, and be accordingly underſtood: and hereby will the truth and true ſence or ſcope of the place evidently

appeare: & this way no rationall man can deny.

Now both theſe ſences appeare, as in other places, ſo eſpeciall in thoſe two ſeverall places the Corinths laſt cited: in each whereof both theſe ſences are continued, and evidently expreſſed: that is, in what reſpect or by whom thoſe meats offered to Idols might be eaten, and in what reſpect and by whom they ought not, which cannot chooſe but fully determine the mater *viz.*

It is evident that all ſuch as have knowledge that an Idol is nothing, as is ſufficiently before declared, are commanded, and have free liberty to eat even of meats offered to Idols, as appeareth by the 1 *Cor.* 8. *ch.* and *ch.* 10. 27, 29. verſes, and ſo in like manner all ſuch as have knowledge in Chriſt Circumciſion is nothing nor uncircumciſion but a new Creature, , that meats defile not, but are good, and nothing to be refuſed, muſt needs be freed likwiſe from Circumciſion, and have free liberty to eat of all meats.

And againe all ſuch as through their weakneſs have not this knowledge, that Idols are nothing and circumciſion nothing, but take offence thereat, imagining that meats defile &c. are forbidden to eat ſuch meats as apeareth by the 7. chapter of this Treatiſe from *Rom.* 14. 1 *Cor.* 8. &c.

Now the queſtion or matter to be enquired

is,

is, whether these Christians at Antioch were of those persons, that were strong well grounded christians and had the knowledge, that an Idole was nothing, and that circumcision was nothing, and that the ceremoniall Law which consisted in meats was abolished, and so had liberty to eat those meats, and to sit at meat in the Idols Temple, without scruple or offence, and had therefore no need of any condescention to their weakness or whether they were of those persons that were weak, and not well grounded in Religion, but were of the number of those, that had not the knowledge but with conscience of the Idol might eat it as a thing offered to an Idol, and their conscience being weak might be defiled 1 *Cor.* 8. 7. and therefore had need of a charitable Condescention to their weakness to encourage them and draw them on by degrees, least they should stumble, and take offence, and therefore ought not to eat, least their Conscience were defiled.

But it is evident that they were of this latter sort, *viz.* weak unsetled Christians destitute of this knowledge that circumcision was nothing, for they were halfe perswaded, that they ought to be Circumcised, and were faine to send to Jerusalem about it *Act.* 15. 1, 2. so farre destitute of knowledge and Faith to believe that the ceremoniall Law was abolished,

ſhed that it occaſioned much diſputing about it *v.* 7. and deſtitute alſo they well might be of the knowledge, that an Idol, or meats offered to Idols was nothing, they were ſo lately converted from Idolatry.

And therefore it was very neceſſary, and very ſuitable to their weak condition, and to the word of God, that they ſhould have that Command to abſtaine from meats offered to Idols, and from things ſtrangled, and from blood, leaſt by eating their weak conſcience ſhould be defiled. And therefore the Apoſtles as they adviſed and commanded others *Rom.* 14. 13, 15, 21, 22, *ch.* 15. 1, 2. 1 *Cor.* 8. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13. and *ch.* 10. 28, 31, 32, 33. and carryed themſelves towards ſuch weake Chriſtians in other places *viz.* in *Pauls* circumciſing *Timothy Act.* 16. 3. in ſhaving his head *Act.* 18. 18. in preparing himſelfe to obſerve the Law, *Act.* 21. 26, 27. all before at large inſiſted upon, ſo accordingly carryed they themſelves towards theſe Chriſtians at Antioch in condeſcending to their weakneſs to abſtaine from theſe meats.

Seeing then (to ſumme up all this) that the Word of God ſo cleerly diſtinguiſheth, who who may lawfully eat even of meats offered to Idols &c. *viz.* ſuch as have this knowledge above mentioned and who may not eat; *viz.* ſuch as are weak Chriſtians, and have not this knowledge:

knowledge: and seeing these Christians at Antioch so evidently appeare to be of this latter sort *viz.* weak Christians, that have not this knowledge, and therefore for that cause were commanded to abstaine: will any be so willfull, so ignorant, or void of reason as to maintaine that because these Christians by reason of their weakness, and want of knowledge were commanded to abstaine, that therefore strong Christians, or such as then had, or now have knowledge, that meats are nothing; are commanded to abstaine from those meats, when the Apostle commandeth such to eat thereof, without asking any question for conscience sake, unless any such weak Christian take exception, or stumble at such eating? What is this but ignorantly to confound the Scripture, or willfully to oppose and wrest the Word of God? especially if after they come to understand the truth hereof, they shall suffer Satan to infuse into their hearts a Spirit of malice and opposition, wherein they will no doubt be assisted and stirred up out of a heart impatient of conviction, to lay about them for a thousand Cavills to pervert the truth, unless they shall earnestly pray unto the God of truth for an humble spirit patiently to submit unto the same.

CHAP. XV.

A Concluſion comprizing a compendium of the whole matter.

TO conclude then from the whole we thus collect, That we find the commands of God in his word two fold *viz.* ſome generall, ſome particular, ſome permanent or perpetuall, ſome tranſient or temporall. The generall, and permanent, or perpetuall Commands of God are chiefly the morall Law, (although we are freed from the rigorous exaction thereof by Chriſt Joh. 8. 36. *Rom.* 6. 14. and 7. 23, 24, 25. and 10. 4. *Gal.* 3. 24, 25.) and the Evangelicall Law in all commands that reſpect faith, and obedience in and to Jeſus Chriſt. The particular and temporary commands of God were chiefly the ceremoniall Law, which by the death of Chriſt was aboliſhed, as is before declared; and theſe temporary precepts under the Goſpel, whereby the Apoſtles ſometimes took upon themſelves, and admoniſhed others to condeſcend to the weakneſſe of new Converts to the faith of Jeſus Chriſt, as hath been before declared.

So that with the Learned we ſay, that this Commandment

Command to these Christians at Antioch, was onely *Temporale præceptum*, given to those Christian Gentiles &c. by the Apostles as a condescention to their weakness *pro tempore*, to preserve unity till they had attained to a greater measure of knowledge of their Christian liberty, that they might *non ranseſtim ſed ſenſim vel paulatim*, not rashly but by degrees wean them from Idolatrous worship, so from those ceremoniall observations, whereunto they found them so much adhereing, least for want of knowledge they might take offence, or their weak conscience by eating be defiled. And therefore we affirme that this command of the Apostles to these weak Christians could not be nor was not at all by them intended, as a perpetuall binding precept to all or any well grounded Christians under the Gospell to abstaine from those meats, who knew their freedome from any pollution by the same, seeing all such as have knowledge have free liberty, and are commanded to eat of all sorts of meats yea even of things offered to Idols, not asking any question for conscience sake; unless any weak Christian take offence thereat. And all this I hope by this time appeareth *Meridiano Jubare clarius* by what hath been before delivered.

And that this was onely a temporall Command, as is here declared, agreeth *Calvin* on

Act. 15. 28. where he ſaith, *Nam de rebus per ſe neceſſariis leges oportet eſſe perpetuas. Atqui legem hanc, ſimul ac ceſſavit tumultus & contentio, ſcimus à Paulo refixam eſſe, ubi docet nihil eſſe immundum, & quibuſlibet veſci cibis, etiam qui Idolis eſſent immolati, liberum & licitum facit* 1 Cor. 8. 8. & 10. 19. *Quare ex hac voce inanem prætextum captant ad ligandas conſcientias, quum neceſsitas de qua nunc agitur non niſi ad homines reſpectum habueret in externo uſu, ne ſcandalum inde naſceretur: coram Deo autem intacta conſtaret libertas.* For concerning things neceſſary in themſelves, it behoveth that the Lawes be perpetuall, but we know, that this Law, ſo ſoon as the tumult and contention ceaſed, was by *Paul* repealed, where he teacheth that nothing is unclean, and maketh it free and lawfull to eat any meats even ſuch as are ſacrificed unto Idols 1 *Cor.* 8. 8. and 10. 19. wherefore from this word (Neceſſary) they lay hold upon a vaine pretence to bind mens conſciences, when the neceſſity which is here ſpoken of can have no reference to men, but in the externall uſe, leaſt an offence ſhould grow thereby, when in the ſight of God their liberty ſtood untouched.

Now if it be urged, that this being an Evangelicall Command, becauſe given under the Goſpell, ought therefore to be obſerved

as

as perpetuall; That will not follow: for as there were particular Commands given under the Law which were not perpetuall; so were there under the Gospell: as to Instance in one or two under the Law.

The Lord commanded *Abraham to offer up Isaac his sonne unto him for a burnt offering* Gen. 22. 2. not in the least intending the perpetuity of that Command in future ages to do the like: But he being the Lord of life, that gave life to every living Creature might lawfully require the life of his creatures, when and by whom he pleased.

Againe he commanded the Israelites to *borrow of the Egyptians Jewells of Silver, and Jewells of Gold Exod.* 11. 2. *whereby the Egyptians were spoiled ch.* 12. 36. yet intended not to perpetuate this command as a president for future Imitation. *But the earth being the Lords, and the fullness thereof Deut.* 10. 14. *Psal.* 24. 1. 1 *Cor.* 10. 26. he might lawfully dispose of the Egyptians and their goods, as pleased himselfe without the Least impeachment of his Justice by any upon perill of extream blasphemy: but to the point.

To be brief under the Gospel our Saviour Christ giveth a command to his Apostles *Mat.* 10. 9. saying provide neither *Gold nor Silver nor Brasse in your purses v.* 10. *Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shooes,*

nor

nor yet ſtaves: yet this command was not perpetuall: For in *Luk.* 22. is that command by our Saviour againe repealed *v.* 36. *Then ſaid he unto them: But he that hath a purſe let him take it, and likewiſe his ſcrip: and he that hath no ſword let him ſell his garment and buy one.*

So although the Apoſtles in *Act.* 15. gave a command to thoſe Chriſtians at Antioch to abſtaine from thoſe meats, yet could not the ſame, nor was it intended to be a perpetuall binding precept to all Chriſtians: in regard as *Calvin* well obſerved, as hath been heretofore delivered, that command was by the Apoſtle *Paul* repealed, in 1 *Cor.* 8. and *ch.* 10. 25, 27, 28, 29. where there is free liberty granted to eat of thoſe very meats offered to Idols, and therefore of the reſt that were in *Act.* 15. prohibited as alſo in all ſuch places of Scripture, as hold forth all things pure; nothing vncleane; and nothing to be refuſed &c. before cited.

And therefore the late practice of any in prohibiting ſuch meats at this day to knowing Chriſtians evidently appeareth to be a meer foppery, plainely to be εἰδωλοθρησκείαν a meer ſuperſtition, or will-worſhip and that they either ignorantly, or wilfully wreſt the Scripture, and groſly abuſe the Word of God to maintain and uphold this their fond and erroneous opinion: of which we may ſay,

as

as *Hilary* doth (*Hilar. in Pſal.* 64.) of Abſtinence from fleſh in Lent, that it is altogether vaine and fooliſh, and reſpect of the cauſes of their ſuperſtition, it is alſo miſerable.

CHAP. XVI.

The firſt Objection raiſed and anſwered for the more full Illuſtration of this Truth.

NOw it remaineth for the cleering of the point, to remove ſome ſuch Remora's of Objections as to ſome may ſeem to ſtop the courſe or current of this truth, and to diſpell ſuch Clouds as perhaps may be raiſed up to offuſcate or eclipſe the ſplendor of this expoſition, or ſence delivered.

Object. And firſt perhaps it may be objected, that this command to abſtaine from the blood of the Creatures is not onely found here under the Goſpell, and in the Ceremoniall Law ſet down by *Moſes Lev.* 7. 26. but alſo is of more Antiquity than *Moſes* himſelf: for we find the Lord himſelfe giving the ſame command *Gen.* 9. in the time of *Noah*, many hundred yeares before the dayes of *Moſes*, where he ſaith

V. *But fleſh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof ſhall you not eat.*

So

So that this seemeth not to be a Ceremoniall institution, being given so long before the time that *Moses* wrote the ceremoniall Law: and therefore to practice the same now by all Christians under the Gospell is not to revive the ceremoniall Law, as hath been before alleadged, but in obedience unto such a Command under the Gospell, as the people performed the same in obedience unto a commande given them by God himselfe, so long before the time of *Moses*, who wrote the severall Ordinances and Institutions of the Ceremoniall Law.

Ans. This Objection indeed is scarce worth either the making or the answering; for it can hardly be propounded for answering it selfe. For what though those many, and diverse Ordinances of the Ceremoniall Law, were not recorded, till the time of *Moses*, when Gods chosen people were multiplyed, and to be set in a way of worship, and service to their God: It doth not thence follow, that the Ceremoniall Law was not in use before the time of *Moses*, for that it was in use even from the beginning is apparent not onely by the Lord's commanding *Noah*, not to eat the blood of the Creatures; but also by the sacrifices offered by *Noah*, *Gen.* 8. 20. and so upwards even to the offering of *Cain*, and *Abel*, *Gen.* 4. Sacrifices being a principall part

of

of the Ceremoniall Law: whereby it appeareth that the Ceremoniall Law was in force and use even from the beginning, and so abstaining from blood as a part thereof. As indeed it was requisite that those Types, shadowes and offerings of attonement for Gods people should even from the beginning be in use and so continue, till Christ which was the Antitype, true substance, aud all sufficient Sacrifice should come, by whose offering himself once for all, all these Types, shadowes and ceremoniall Sacrifices, and observations of meats and the like should be abolished and taken away, as needless and, useless in a Christian Church.

For the reason why Gods people under the Law as in *Gen.* 9. 4. *Lev.* 7. 26,27. were prohibited to eat of the blood of the creatures, is manifest, *viz.* because the life of the creatures, which was in the blood, was given to the people to offer for their lives, or to make an Attonement for their soules *Heb.* 9. 7. 13, 22. therefore it was the will and pleasure of God, that his people should not eat of the blood, or life which was to be an expiation for their lives and for their soules, as appeareth *Lev.* 3. *v.* 3, 8, 13. compared with *v.* 17, and especially *Lev.* 17. 10, 11.

V. 10. *And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourne among*

among you that eateth any manner of blood, I will even set my face against that soul, that eateth blood and will even cut him off from among his people.

V. 11. *For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the Altar to make an Attonement for your soules: for it is the blood that maketh an Attonement for the soul.*

V. 12. *Therefore I sayd unto the children of Israel; no soul of you shall eat blood; neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood.*

And therefore this is the very reason, that they were commanded in the next verse *v.* 13. to poure out the blood of beasts and foules that were caught and might be eaten, *viz.* it being in the time of the law, the blood was the Attonement for their soules untill the comeing and passion of Jesus Christ.

But Christ the very image and true substance shaddowed out by those legall Types being come, and offering up himselfe once for all *Heb.* 9. 25, 26, 28. nnd 10, 12, 14. whereby all those legall oblations, Types, and shadowes were taken away *Heb.* 10. 9, 18. and *ch.* 8. 13. and shedding his precious blood *Heb* 9. 12. as an onely and alsufficient Attonement for the soules of men, whereby the offering and sprinkling of the blood of Bulls, and

of

of Goats, &c. which typified the blood of Christ, ceased thereby to be any longer an Attonement for the soul *Heb.* 10. 1, 2, 4. What sense or reason can there be for the Prohibition of meats made of blood any longer, but onely upon the grounds before delivered.

For *Sublatâ causa tollitur effectus* The cause of that Prohibition to eat the blood of the creatures was; because the blood of the creatures was offered as an Attonement for the Soul; but all such offerings being ceased under the Gospell, and utterly taken away by the offering of Christs most precious blood, that prohibition to eat things confected of blood must likewise cease, and be abolished: as is evidently confirmed from *Col.* 2.

V. 16. *Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink &c.*

V. 17. *Which are the shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ.*

Heb. 9. 9. *Which was a figure of the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and Sacrifices, that could not make him that did the Service perfect as pertaining to the conscience.*

V. 10. *Which stood onely in meats and drinks and divers washings, and carnall Ordinances* imposed on them till the time of reformation.

V. 11. *But Christ being come, an High-*

Priest

Prieſt of good things to come by a greater and more perfect Tabernacle not made with hands, that is to ſay not of this building.

V. 12. *Neither by the blood of Goats, and Calves: but by his own blood he entred in once into the holy place having obtained eternall redemption for us.*

What can be more cleer for here we ſee plainely that thoſe Gifts and Sacrifices, or Ceremoniall obſervations (*Nam idem valet atque quod addit proximo verſu, ceremonias omnes impoſitas fuiſſe uſque ad tempus correctionis* ſaith *Calvin* on the 9. verſe.) which ſtood in meats and drinks and carnall Ordinances, were impoſed on them, and ſo were to continue, but untill the time of reformation, when Chriſt by his own blood, once entred, and obtained eternall redemption for us:

But the abſtinence from theſe meats and the blood of the Creatures were Ceremoniall obſervations, which ſtood in meats and carnall ordinances:

Therefore it was impoſed on them, or was to continue but untill the time of Reformation, or the coming and paſſion of Jeſus Chriſt.

And therefore *Bucerus* on *Rom.* 14. 14. ſaith as if the Apoſtle had ſaid *Moſes quidem cibos quoſdam deſignavit impuros, quibus veſci nefas erat; quoſdam mundos quibus veſci fas erat.*

Nunc

Nunc scio, & persuasum habeo Christi afflatu, cui carnalem legis partem prorsus abolitam vult quod nihil suapte natura impurum: sed mundos esse omnes cibos ideoque liberos tibi relinquo. Moses indeed pointed out certaine meats as uncleane, which it was unlawfull, or an offence to eat: others as cleane, which it was lawfull to eat. Now I know and am perswaded by the inspiration of Christ, of whom it is his pleasure, that the carnall part of the Law be uterly abolished, that nothing in its own nature is uncleane, but that all meats are cleane, and therefore I leave them free for thee.

So that all these things considered, to goe about to maintaine a prohibition of these meats as a generall binding precept under the Gospell, can be no better than to bring in a Jewish custome, to revive or endeavour to re-establish the Ceremoniall Law, so long ago abolished, or to maintaine a vaine superstition or will-worship in the Christian Church: whereby such wander out beyond the true bond of faith. *Theoph. in* 13. *ch. ad Heb.*

CHAP. XVII.

A second Objection raised and answered to cleer the Text.

BUt wherefore should that of Fornication, being a Breach of the Morall Law, which is perpetuall and so cannot be denyed to be a perpetuall precept also, being the seaventh of the Decalogue, be here incerted amongst these concerning meats; but that it thereby appeareth that they also are perpetuall, and ought as well as it to continue, as binding to all Christians? why should these be but temporall, seeing that is perpetuall?

Ans. I answer: Could abstinence from meats be proved to be a morall Precept some thing might be said for its perpetuity. But it being Ceremoniall (although being under the Gospell it was so but *usu externo*, and so not really ceremoniall, beause not typicall) and therefore however temporall: It will not follow by any manner of good Consequence that the Perpetuity of one Precept, becaus it is joyned with temporall precepts, should therefore make them perpetuall also: for what sence were it, or good conclusion could it be to say, that where or becaus a morall precept, which is perpetuall, is mentioned among Ceremoniall

Ceremoniall precepts, which were temporall, there, or therefore those Ceremoniall precepts must be perpetuall. Such intermixion of morall, and ceremoniall precepts we finde, *Lev.* 19. especially verses, 19, 20, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30. yet who will conclude those ceremoniall precepts, because mixed with morall, therefore to be perpetuall, which to do indeed were as great simplicity, as for a man that hath one piece of Gold among many of Silver, therefore to conclude that all his Silver are pieces of Gold: or because a man of an hundred years of Age liveth among younger people, therefore they all must be as old as he.

Repl. But why then was the prohibition of fornication Inserted there among the rest, if the prohibition of the rest as well as it were not to remain perpetuall.

Answ. To this we may answer with *Brentius*, on *Act.* 15. 20. *Alia fuit causa, cur scortationem reficeret in eorum ordinem, quæ per se non erant illicita.* It was for another cau e that (the Apostle *James*) put fornication into the Rank of those things which in themselves were not unlawfull &c. which was because those Gentiles were so addicted to that vice and the propensity of their Inclination thereunto was such: that they let loose the raines, of their inordinate desires to the satisfaction of their own corrupt lusts, and were

carried with full career into the ſame. *Neque enim id vitio Gentibus dabatur hominum Judicio* (ſaith *Bullinger* on the ſame place) *ſiquis etiam contaminatiſmus hac ſpurcitie foret.* Yea ſo common was that vice among them which is called *Concubinatus*, being the vice as *Calvin* hath it which is here meant, *& cujus tantam conſuetudinem ſibi fecerant gentes, ut propemodum inſtar legis foret.* And therefore the Apoſtles judged it neceſſary to put ſome curb or reſtraint upon them by adding this precept among the reſt againſt that ſin of fornication.

Repl. But if the Text be a condeſcention of the Apoſtles to thoſe weak Chriſtians, then that of fornication, ſeeing it is in the ſame Text will be made onely a condeſcention likewiſe; which cannot be.

Anſw. I ſay not, neither at all intended, that whole Text to be a condeſcention but onely the Apoſtles Act or carriage towards them in reference to the Abſtinence from thoſe meats; which being the chief ſubject of this diſcourſe are ſufficiently before proved in what reſpect lawfull to be eaten, by comparing the ſame with other Scriptures: that of Fornication onely being thought by the Apoſtles very neceſſary to be added, or inſerted amongſt the reſt, in regard of theſe Gentiles propenſity thereunto, & ignorance thereof to be a ſin: not that either the ſame ſhould be

be a Temporary condeſcention, but a perpetuall Command, nor the other a perpetuall Comand to all, but a charitable condeſcention to them by reaſon of their weakneſs. For it is not the intermixing of temporary and perpetuall commandes together (as is before ſaid) that can change them one into another: neither ought we by their intermixtion, or interlocation among one another to judge them all temporall or all perpetuall, for as ceremonial precepts by their Interpoſition, or mixture with morall cannot render them temporal: ſo neither can morall precepts cauſe the ceremoniall to be perpetuall: neither can we onely by their placing or ſtation diſcover which is which, but by underſtanding the Scripture, and the nature of each precept ſeverally in it ſelfe, and the ſcope and intention of the Holy Ghoſt in the ſame: as hath I hope, here before to the capacity of the meaneſt ſufficiently been demonſtrated.

CHAP. XVIII.

The third Objection raiſed and anſwered to vindicate this Truth.

THirdly it may be objected, that this command to abſtain from things offered to

Idols, from things ſtrangled and blood, as well as from fornication muſt be more than an ordinary command, or bare condeſcention to thoſe Chriſtians weakneſs, and ſeemeth to be intended, as a binding precept to continue in the Church, in regard there is ſuch a binding obliging authority, and more than ordinary expreſsion uſed by the Apoſtles to confirme the ſame, *viz. It ſeemed good to the Holy Ghoſt, and to us &c.* v.28. Which very expreſſion imports a command not to be ſlighted or neglected in its due obſervation: neither would the Apoſtles have uſed, ſuch an obliging expreſsion, if they had not intended it as a generall practiſe to continue in the Church, to which I anſwer.

Firſt: As for this part of the Objection: that it is onely uncharitable, and favourable condeſcention to thoſe Chriſtians weakneſſe, according as hath been before delivered, and that it cannot be any generall binding precept, is ſufficiently before proved, and convincingly enough declared: I hope to the ſatisfaction of diſſenting judgements.

Secondly, as for that expreſſion, deriving the Authority of that Command from the Holy Ghoſt. What Authority is in that commande, or in that Expreſſion more then in all other commands in *Scripture*. Although the expreſſion may ſeem more, yet the Authority

can be no more, than what the generall commands in Scripture are grounded upon *viz.* the Holy-Ghoſt, for the Apoſtle telleth us plainly, that *All Scripture is given by inſpiration of God* 2 Tim. 3. 16. and this Scripture the Apoſtles ſay not, is any more then from the Holy Ghoſt, which is as much as to ſay, by Inſpiration of God and can be no more, but is all one. The Apoſtles and Prophets, as in this, ſo in all their preaching and writing conſulting with, and being acted by the Holy Ghoſt, in the publication of his will and commandes unto the Sonnes of men. For prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God ſpake as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt, 2 *Pet.* 1. 21. ſo that this can be no more then other commands; *viz.* others as well as this proceeding from, and being the dictates of the Holy Ghoſt.

Thirdly, but the reaſon why the Holy Ghoſt in this place is mentioned, and brought in, more then in other places is cleer by the context of the verſe, , and neceſſity of the matter *viz.* as being ſpoken in reference to the very next words following in the ſame verſe, although not altogether, yet rather then to the Words in the next verſe. For the Apoſtles diſcerning by the great diſſention riſen in the Church at *Antioch*, and by their ſending to Jeruſalem about it, v. 2. how eager ſome

were to impoſe others to take upon them the great burthen of circumciſion and keeping of the Law, were faine to urge unto them, and bring in the very authority of the holy Ghoſt, by which they were directed in all their Actions, that they might thereby worke the greater Impreſsion upon them, in diſwading them from ſo great a burthen and endleſs trouble, as Circumciſion, and the keeping of the Law. As if they had ſaid: it is not the will of the Holy Ghoſt, that ye ſhould trouble your ſelves with that great burthen of Circumciſion, and keeping of the Law which were aboliſhed by the death of Chriſt.

For it ſeemed good to the Holy Ghoſt and to us, to lay upon you no greater burthen, then thoſe neceſſary things, v. 28.

So that the mention of the Holy Ghoſt, maketh nothing for the continuance of that practice, as a generall and perpetuall Ordinance: nor was uſed or intended by the Apoſtles to that end, but onely or chiefly the more fully and forcibly to prevaile with thoſe late converts to relinquiſh, and leave off the Ceremonies of the Law, as is cleere and evident from the Connexion of the words, if duely weighed, and without any foreſtalled opinion ſeriouſly conſidered. Let not any therefore by ſuch ſmall objections, raiſing Surges, that rather cleer then ſtop the way, be ſo eaſily

ſily diverted or turned out of the right path, or channell of ſo cleer a Truth: both the precedent and ſubſequent objections making far more for, than againſt the truth delivered, and therefore as much to that purpoſe urged, as to ſatisfie ſuch, as ſcruple at the ſame.

CHAP. XIX.

A fourth Objection anſwered, ſhewing the neceſſity of this Condeſcention.

FOurthly: But from the laſt words of the 28. verſe, there ariſeth a fourth Objection, which is this:

Why ſhould the Apoſtles appoint the Abſtinence from theſe meats as neceſſary things, if it were not neceſſary for all Chriſtians to obſerve the ſame? to which we anſwer,

Firſt that from the verſe we may infallibly collect, that as Circumciſion, and the keeping of the Ceremoniall Law are by the Apoſtles accounted a great burthen; ſo the Abſtinence from theſe meats may be granted, and is cleerly thence inferred to be a burthen alſo, although not ſo great a burthen as the other, For if it ſeemed good to the Holy Ghoſt and to the Apoſtles to lay upon them no greater Burthen

Burthen, then thoſe neceſſary things, then thoſe things though neceſſary, are granted to be a burthen, and in the ſame ſence that the other were ſo: which if ſo, then they could not be neceſſary for all ſorts of Chriſtians, becauſe Circumciſion and the keeping of the Law were not; but it muſt be in ſome particular reſpect which hath already been declared, and next cometh to be repeated.

Secondly: the reaſon then, why the abſtinence from thoſe meats were by the Holy Ghoſt and the Apoſtles declared to be neceſſary things, was becauſe of the weakneſs of thoſe Chriſtians, and to hold the Churches in peace and unity: As if the Apoſtles had ſaid, ſeeing we find you ſo weak as to burthen your ſelves with theſe things which were but ſhadowes and are vaniſhed: yet that we might ſomewhat eaſe your burthen, It ſeemed good to the holy Ghoſt and to us, and neceſſary for you, by reaſon of your weakneſs in the knowledge of your freedome from the Law, and of your liberty of eating ſuch things, to condeſcend thus far unto you in theſe things, ſeeing they are but things Indifferent, As that ye abſtain from theſe meats, till ye have attained unto more knowledge of your liberty to eat thereof, to wean you by degrees from thoſe ceremoniall obſervations leaſt if we ſhould on the ſudden, and at once deny you

in

in all things, you might thereby take offence, and fall at diſcord, or diſagreement in the Churches, or your weake conſcience by eating might be defiled.

And thus for this reaſon it is *viz.* for their weakneſs, and to preſerve unity, and concord in the Churches, that this abſtinence from theſe meats is ſaid to be neceſſary, not for any neceſſity of continuing that practiſe among knowing Chriſtians; no nor among new Converts to Chriſtianity, except it be to preſerve Concord, or in caſe of offence, and all this may juſtly be collected from this Text compared with the Scriptures before mentioned.

And therefore *Calvin* on that place in *Act.* 15. 28. concerning the neceſsity of abſtaining from theſe meats ſaith; *Non ultra viguit hæc neceſsitas, quam periculum erat ſcindendæ unitatis. Ita proprie loquendo accidentalis fuit iſta neceſſitas, vel extrinſeca, quæ ſcilicet non in re, ſed tantum in cavendo offendiculo ſita erat. Quod ex decreto ſtatim abrogato clarius patet.* That neceſſity was of force no farther than there was danger of breach of unity, for to ſpeake properly, that neceſſity was accidentall, or extrinſecall: to wit; which conſiſted not in the thing it ſelf, but onely in taking heed of offence, which doth the more cleerly appeare, in that that decree was preſently abrogated, which he ſheweth afterwards, as is before declared

declared to be in 1 *Cor.* 8. & 10. chapters &c.

So then the neceſſity of that abſtinence there mentioned, appeareth to be not meant in reference to thoſe meats, as if there were any impurity, or unlawfullneſs in the eating thereof, for any thing in thoſe meats themſelves; but in reference to the Condition of thoſe weak Chriſtians: *viz.* to preſerve concord in the Churches, and that thoſe late converts might not take offence: which laſt words lead us to an other Objection.

CHAP. XX.

A fifth Objection anſwered, diſcovering the great weakneſs of all ſuch as are thus miſled, in this their practiſe, and opinion.

Fifthly it it may be objected from the laſt words, that the Pedobaptiſts then cannot, nor do not deny, but in caſe of offence, that is if any take offence or ſcruple at their eating, as conceiving it unlawfull, they ought to abſtaine from thoſe meats: leaſt they give them offence: for this the Apoſtle alſo affirmeth by ſeverall Cautions, or Commands to the ſame purpoſe. *Rom.* 14.

V. 15. *But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkeſt thou not charitably: deſtroy not him with thy meat, for whom Chriſt dyed.* *V.* 20.

V. 20. *For meat deſtroys not the work of God:*

V. 21. *It is good neither to eat fleſh, nor to drink wine nor any thing, whereby thy Brother ſtumbleth or is offended, or is made weake.* So v. 3, 4, 13. Thus alſo 1 *Cor.* 8. *ch.*

V. 13. *Wherefore if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no fleſh while the world ſtandeth, leaſt I make my brother to offend.* See to the ſame purpoſe *verſ.* 9, 10, 11, 12. So alſo 1 *Cor.* 10. *ch.*

V. 28. *But if any man ſay unto you. this is offered in Sacrifice unto Idols, eat not for his ſake that ſhewed it, and for conſcience ſake.*

Now this being ſo, why do not the Pedobaptiſts, or ſuch as take liberty to eat, forbear eating thoſe meats for giving the *Anab.* (or ſuch of them as refuſe to eat) offence? To all which we anſwer ſeverall things.

Firſt, From the place firſt urged againſt us, *viz. Rom.* 14. *ch.* we find the Apoſtle, as giving that caution v. 3. *Let not him that eateth, deſpiſe him that eateth not*; ſo in the very next words: *Let not him that eateth not, judge him that eateth: for God hath received him*: from whence is already gained thus much cleerly, *viz.* not only that it is lawfull for us to eat, but alſo that it is not lawfull for ſuch as refuſe to eat, neither ought they to cenſure or Judge us for eating. [*Auguſt. in lib. Quæſt Evang.*]

But

But how we ought to carry ourselves toward them, whether to despise them or abstain for giving them offence, shall Godwilling afterward be answered.

Secondly but before that be determined and that the same may the better be discerned, it is to be considered first what cause or upon what occasion the Apostles gave those severall commands to some not to eat, to others not to give occasion of stumbling, or offence unto them by eating of such meats, &c. 2. Whether the Haimapesthites condescention now adayes be directly the same with those Christians at Antioch, and so should require the same Condescention.

As for the cause or occasion of those Commands, it hath been evidently before declared, not to be any reall pollution in those meats, or unlawfullnesse for that cause to eat thereof: but onely the weaknesse of those Christians, who for want of sufficient knowledge of their freedome from any pollution thereby by reason of their late Conversion, might eat against their Conscience, and so through weakness their conscience might be defiled. That the weakness of some new converts in faith and knowledge in those primitive times was the cause, that they were advised by the Apostles to abstaine from meats, whereat they scrupled, least their weak conscience

ſcience by eating ſhould be defiled, appeareth cleerly as by what hath been before delivered, ſo by *Rom.* 14. 1, 2, 3. 14. verſes, compared with *v.* 23.

And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, becauſe he eateth not of faith: whatſoever is not of Faith is ſinne.

And that the weakneſs of theſe new converts in Faith, and knowledge was alſo the cauſe, why ſtrong well grounded Chriſtians who knew there was no pollution therein, were notwithſtanding prohibited to eat, leaſt they gave ſuch offence, or emboldned them to eat, and thereby to defile their weak Conſciences, Is as cleer from the places before cited *Rom.* 14. 1, 2, 3. compared with *v.* 13, 15. and *v.* 21. *It is good neither to eat fleſh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother ſtumbleth, or is offended, or is made weake.* So alſo 1 *Cor.* 8. *ch. v.* 9.

But take heed leaſt by any meanes this liberty of yours become a ſtumbling block to them that are weak.

V. 10. *For if any man ſee thee which haſt knowledge ſit at meat in the Idols Temple, ſhall not the Conſcience of him that is weak be emboldned to eat thoſe things which are offered to Idols?*

V. 11. *And through thy knowledge ſhall the weak brother periſh for whom Chriſt dyed.*

V. 12. *But when ye ſin ſo againſt the Brethren, and*

and wound thy weak conſcience, ye ſin againſt Chriſt v. 13. So alſo *ch.* 10. 28, 29.

Here we ſee the Caſe ſo cleer, theſe meats ſo lawfull to be eaten, ſo free from pollution, and liberty to eat thereof, for any thing in the meats: ſo free, that we evidently find it meer weakneſs and want of faith, and knowledge in any that ſtumbled, or refuſed to eat thereof.

But how do we all this while hereby as evidently diſcover the weak condition of ſuch amongſt us, as have ſtumbled at theſe harmeleſs things? How much is it to be admired, and lamented, that ſuch who have lived ſo far from thoſe primitive times, when Chriſtianity was in its infancy, that they have been brought up in the reformed Churches, even where the light of the Goſpell hath ſhone forth in it's luſtre: and yet notwithſtanding ſhould be as weake in Chriſtianity, as weake in faith, as weak in knowledge in this very reſpect, as thoſe primitive Chriſtians, that they ſhould have need to be fed againe with milke, and not ſtrong meats, that as Saint *Paul* ſaid with the weake he became as weak that he might gaine the weake, ſo we ſhould now find Chriſtians ſo weake, that we muſt be now enforced with the Apoſtles to condeſcend unto their weakneſs, leaſt by eating their weak Conſcience ſhould be defiled.

Well

Well might those primitive Christians indeed be excused for stumbling at those things, In regard they were so lately converted to Christianity, that they could not on the sudden be firmely setled in the knowledge of all things, and sufficiently grounded in the truth, and that the Apostles judiciously considered, when they wrote so favourably unto them. Well might they to whom Idols were become so odious after their first conversion, without much blame feare defilement even from the very meats offered to Idols, whom Idolatry had so deeply and so long defiled.

Neither were they much to be blamed for leaning or adhering to the Ceremoniall law, wo being put upon a new Religion, happily wanted those Scriptures to direct them, that we enioy, and therefore knew not what Law, Customes, or Religion to embrace or follow more likely, than such as had been ever the practice of such as converted them to Christianity, especially seeing some of those their Jewish Teachers themselves endeavoured to obtrude upon them the doctrine, or observation of the Ceremoniall Law.

But for Christians in these days so many hundred yeares after the ceasing, and abolition of the Ceremoniall Law, living in the very Sunshine of the Gospell, & enjoying so much cleer

Scripture to direct and satisfie them in this truth, being a priviledge which doubtlesse those Christians wanted, yet not withstanding to be so ignorant of their Christian liberty and freedome to eat all sorts of meats so fully declared lawfull in the Word of God, that they will needs perswade a needlesse abstinence from those meats, which so many Scriptures so clerly tell us, we may lawfully, and freely eat, and to dote after such ceremoniall Observations which are so well known to be so long agoe abolished, what a sad story is it for Christians to consider? A very ill Symptome sure (as is it much to be doubted) that Sathans prevailing power doth too much delude such in blinding their eyes that they cannot deceive so cleer a truth. How can we choose but much suspect their unsoundnes, and errour in greater matters, when they are so ignorant in such meane things. For how is it possible that they should throughly know as they pretend, and truely understand or teach, and judge aright of other more difficult & mysterious points, when they are so weake in their knowledge of so easy, and so cleer a truth. Let them not go about to medle with deep mysteries, if they know not that which is obvious to the capacity of the meanest. Let them never offer to dispute about

about Originall Sin, predeſtination, univerſall Grace, Free will, or the like, which have been rejected and condemned for Pelagian, and Arminian errours long agoe. Let them never go about to oppoſe Pedobaptiſme, if they underſtand not their exemption from the Ceremoniall Law, and all its Rites, Cuſtomes and obſervations; but will needs go about to ſet up Superſtition in the Chriſtian reformed Churches, A ſtrange doctrine ſure among Chriſtians; and as ſtrange that ſuch as have from their infancy been brought up in Chriſtian Religion, which conſiſteth in Faith and Obedience, not in meats or drinks *Rom.* 14. 17. ſeeing meat commendeth us not to God 1 *Cor.* 8. 8. Should yet become ſuch infants in Chriſtianity that as they ſay of old men, that they become *bis pueri*: ſo theſe ſhould be now to learne the firſt Rudiments of Chriſtianity again, that ſtrong Chriſtians muſt be faine to condeſcend unto their weakneſs, and thereby feed them againe with milke, as the Apoſtles did to thoſe infant Chriſtians at Antioch leaſt they take offence. Inſomuch that we may ſay to ſuch as the Apoſtle did unto the Hebrews *ch.* 5.

V. 12. *For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the firſt Principles of the Oracles of*

God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

V. 13. *For every one that useth milk, is unskilfull in the word of Righteousness: for he is a Babe.*

V. 14. *But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discerne both good and evill.*

However seeing it is thus that there are such amongst us, whom the Holy Ghost in the Word of God is pleased to point out unto us to be but weak Christians, who scruple at such meats *Rom.* 14. 2. 1 *Cor.* 8. 7, 9, 10, 11, &c. before cited: (and seeing he stileth them weake, they cannot justly except against any for useing that epithite that God himselfe puts upon them in his word) However seeing by these Characters that God gives them in his Word, they discover their so much weakness in these things that are so plaine, and easie; It is a sufficient caveat to all Christians to take heed, how they rashly give Credit to, or follow such in other doctrines, or Tenents which they hold that are of far more difficulty to be understood. And indeed such is the power of Sathan that Prince of darkness, and the coruption of humane Nature, that there may be, and many times are

are ſo many, and ſo intricate Cavils raiſed, that they can much darken and ecclipſe, nay go neer to extinguiſh the light of many Truths held forth and practiſed in the Chriſtian reformed Church: unleſs the ſame be ſeriouſly and judiciouſly weighed and conſidered according to all thoſe Rules or Cautions in the 4. chapter of this Treatiſe delivered.

But that we may proceed: if it be ſo that through weakneſs ſome in theſe dayes ſtumble at theſe things, ſo that their weake and tender conſcience will not permit them to eat of things ſtrangled and blood, how ought they that have knowledge to demeane themſelves towards them? Ought they to deſpiſe them? ſurely no: For the Apoſtles command, we ſee, is: let not him that eateth deſpiſe him that eateth not. They are not therefore to be deſpiſed but pittyed, and inſtructed better with a ſpirit of meekneſſe, by ſuch as have better underſtanding, till they may be reſtored to better knowledge of their liberty.

But to that part of the Objection; That we ought then to abſtaine from theſe meats, for giving offence to theſe weak Chriſtians by our eating: We anſwer with the Learned, *Longe aliud eſſe obſoletas Ceremonias in uſum revocare, quam eas tolerare, donec paulatim in deſuetudinem abierint.*

It is one thing to bring againe into uſe Ceremonies that were already grown out of uſe, and an other thing to tolerate Ceremonies till they by little and little ſhall weare out of uſe.

So that the condition of ſuch, as now adays goe about to revive and reeſtabliſh thoſe Ceremoniall obſervations, which were ſixteen hundred yeares agoe aboliſhed, and are now utterly abſolete, being far different from thoſe primitive Chriſtians, who muſt be born with, till they might by degrees be weaned from the ſame: it is much to be queſtioned, whether we ought to make any Conceſſion, or Condeſcention to them or not: however that we ſhould generally abſtaine from thoſe meats for their diſlike thereof, will in nowiſe follow. *For let not him that eateth not, judge him that eateth, for God hath received him,* Rom. 14. 3.

And therefore *Peter Martyr* on 1 *Cor.* 8. 8. ſaith: *Si aliqui ſunt infirmi, & ſcientia deſtituuntur, non oportet ut nos eorum cauſa Chriſtiana libertate fraudemur.* What though ſome are weak and deſtitute of knowledge, there is no reaſon that we for their cauſe, ſhould be cheated of our Chriſtian Liberty.

Againe there is great queſtion to be made, whether it be not as much obſtinacy, as Infirmity,

Infirmity, as much wilfullneſs as weakneſs in ſome of the Anab. which occaſioneth their refuſall of theſe meats: and then the ground of their refuſall being not the ſame with thoſe primitive Chriſtians, our Condeſcention cannot be the ſame to them, as that was to thoſe primitive Chriſtians, and this judicious *Calvin* on 1 *Cor.* 9. 22. affirmeth ſaying: *Infirmis ergo mos gerendus eſt, non præfractis.*

But we need go no farther than our Saviours Commands and directions in this very point who giveth us a remarkable Character of ſuch, as dreame of any pollution in meats. For the Phariſees (directly as theſe Opinioniſts in theſe dayes) being offended *Mat.* 15. 12. after they heard that ſaying of our Saviour *v.* 11. *Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man &c.* Our Saviour bids his Diſciples, *Let them alone, they be blind leaders of the blind &c. v.* 14. here we ſee not onely this Truth in hand ſufficiently vindicated by our Saviour himſelfe; but alſo how we ought to carry our ſelves towards ſuch as wilfully oppoſe the ſame.

And therefore *Calvin* on this place above glancing at that ſaying of our Saviour about the Phariſees ſaith; *Multi Pervicaſes erant, qui Phariſaicâ, vel Superbia, vel malitia libertatem Chriſtianam ſublatam prorſus optaſſent:*

quibus nunquam (Chriſtus) tantum detuliſſet: Nam tales à nobis curari non vult Chriſtus. There were many ſtiff in opinion, who either by their Phariſaicall pride or malice deſired that Chriſtian liberty ſhould be altogether taken away, to whom Chriſt had never declared ſo much: and as touching ſuch, it is the will of Chriſt that they be not regarded of us.

This ſaying therefore of our Saviour is a ſufficient caveat to ſuch, who now adayes are not onely offended, but even dare to contradict our Saviour; whileſt in effect *tam factis quam dictis* as well in their practice, as in their expreſſions they feare not to affirme, that that which goeth into the mouth may defile a man: but a man would think that it highly concerneth ſuch to take heed, leaſt if they as the Phariſees did willfully perſiſt in ſuch erors, the ſame ſentence ſhould paſſe againſt them, as did againſt thoſe obſtinate Phariſees, Ἄφετε αὐτούς. *Let them alone*: they be blinde leaders of the blinde: And if the blind lead the blind both ſhall fall into the ditch. A remarkable paſſage ſure, and ſufficient caution to ſuch, as wilfully perſiſt in this their errour.

So that ſeeing our Saviours command is to let ſuch alone in their blindneſs, till both leaders and followers fall into the ditch together: I finde not after notice and admonition

tion given them of this their errour, why any ſhould favour them willfully perſiſting in the ſame by any abſtinence from theſe meats.

But which may be a terrour to all ſuch, as hold this fond opinion, It is no leſſe remarkable, what our Saviour ſaith *v.* 13.

V. 10. *And he called the multitude, and ſaid unto them, heare and underſtand:*

V. 11. *Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man: but that which cometh out of the mouth this defileth a man.*

V. 12. *Then came his Diſciples and ſaid unto him: knoweſt thou that the Phariſees were offended after they heard this ſaying.*

V. 13. *But he anſwered and ſaid, every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, ſhall be rooted up.*

As if he had ſaid all ſuch as willfully hold ſo groſſe or fond an opinion, as to imagine that there is any pollution or defilement in any thing that goeth into the mouth, are but plants which my heavenly father hath not planted, and therefore they ſhall be rooted up, they are but as weeds, or as briers, and thorns crept into the Lords vineyard, that ſhall be plucked up by the root, & ſhall not be ſuffered to take root, or *grow* up in the ſame to trouble, hinder or corrupt the true and naturall Plants, and branches, which are of the planting of the Lord. And then he addeth, *V.*

V. 14. *Let them alone: They be blinde laders of the blind and if the blind lead the blind, both ſhall fall into the ditch.*

As much as to ſay, All ſuch Leaders as are ſo blind that they will not diſcerne, or underſtand that there is no defilement in any thing that goeth into the mouth, but willfully hold an opinion and teacheth others, that that which goeth into the mouth may defile the man, & all others their followers, that are ſo blind as to be lead by them into that fond, and eroneous opinion, and untruth, they ſhall all fall into the ditch, they ſhall all of them both leaders and followers ſeeing they can keep the right path no better, plunge themſelves over head, and Eares into the by-ſinkes of errour, and pits of undiſcerned deſtruction.

Yet notwithſtanding ſeeing the Apoſtles have been ever ſo tender of weak Chriſtians, that they have been ever ready in theſe indifferent things to condeſcend unto them, yea have declared it a ſinne if through the eating of ſuch, as have knowledge, *the weak brother periſh for whom Chriſt dyed* 1 *Cor.* 8. 11. (if we may call ſuch brethren, as are gon out from us) and *v.* 12. *But when ye ſin ſo againſt the brethren, and wound their weak Conſcience, ye ſin againſt Chriſt*: Therefore if upon occaſion of feaſts, or the like, the eating of ſuch, as have

have knowledge ſhould happen to embolden, or endanger weake Chriſtians to eat againſt their Conſcience: let us rather forbeare, than by our eating to occaſion our brethren who through weakneſs and not willfullneſſe ſcruple at it, to ſin by their eating alſo.

And thus *Calvin* judiciouſly determineth the matter on *Mat. chap.* 15. *v.* 14. where he ſaith *Hinc ſumpta fuit trita illa de ſcandalis vitandis diſtinctio, quod cavendum ſit, ne Infirmis detur ſcandalum, ſiquis vero contumax, & malignus ſcandalum accipiat, non eſſe curandum.* Hence hath that common diſtinction been taken concerning ehe avoiding of offences, that we muſt take heed, leaſt offence be given to the weak, but if any that is froward and malicious take offence, he is not to be regarded.

And for any weak Chriſtian however, that ſcrupleth at theſe meats, I would not adviſe any ſuch to eat raſhly by the example of others againſt his conſcience. For the Apoſtle ſaith *Rom.* 14. 23. *He that doubteth (Qui dubitat ὁ διακεινόμενος qui diſcernit, diſcriminat dijudicat)* or he that diſcerneth, or putteth a difference between meats (as the word properly ſignifieth) is damned if he eat: becauſe he eateth not of faith: for whatſoever is not of faith is ſin, *Let every man (therefore) be fully perſwaded*

perſwaded in his own minde, v. 5. As *Melanchthon* therefore on this verſe hath it: *Oſtendit ergo unicuique regulam, ac Judicem eſſe debere propriam Conſcientiam, cujus ductu unuſquiſque actiones ſuas ita debet Inſtituere, quemadmodū dominovult reddere rationem. Ita etiam poteſt inſtituere, ut ad Gloriam Dei omnes dirigat. Qui hoc moderamine, atque his finibus veſcitur vel abſtinet, poteſt utcunque rectè facere. Relinquitur ergo, Deum in omnibus hujuſmodi actionibus precipue reſpicere hominum conſcientiam: deinde eatenus boni illas conſulere, quatenus cernit ad ſuam converti gloriam.*

He ſheweth therefore, that every mans own Conſcience ought to be his rule and Judge: by the Guidance whereof every one ought ſo to order his actions as he will render an account unto the Lord. He may alſo ſo order them, that he may direct them all to the glory of God. He which with this moderation, and with theſe limitations eateth or abſtaineth, may do both rightly. Therefore the matter is ſo left, that God in all Actions of this ſort doth chiefly look upon the Conſcience of men, and hereupon doth ſo farforth take thoſe actions in good part as he ſeeth them intended to his Glory. (*Caſſidorus in lib.*5. *cap.*38.

All which being ſo, all ſuch as have hitherto ſcrupled, and have feared to eat theſe meats aga inſt

againſt their Conſcience, when they ſhall by the peruſall hereof, or otherwiſe be convinced of their errour, will hereafter have as great cauſe to feare and beware leaſt they abſtinence from the ſame againſt their Conſcience ſeeing if it be but by what hath been here delivered, they canot chooſe but know and be perſwaded in their own minde, and Conſcience, that they may lawfully eat all ſorts of meats under the Goſpel, whether Idolothytes, things ſtrangled or Blood, and that for any matter of Worſhip in not eating, or ſinne in eating they ought not to abſtaine from the ſame, in regard the lawfullneſſe thereof, and liberty to eat of theſe meats is ſo apparently evident by ſufficient Authority from the Word of God, that 'tis wonder Chriſtians ſhould ſcruple at the ſame, ſo that to ſuch we may anſwer as our *Spiridion* did to a ſtranger that refuſed to eat fleſh in Lent, becauſe he was a Chriſtian: for this cauſe (ſaith Spiridion) oughteſt thou not to refuſe it: for to the clean all things are cleane, as the Word of God hath taught us. (*Soromenus lib.* 1. *cap.* 10. *in Hiſt. tripert.*)

CHAP.

CHAP. XXI.

The laſt Objection Anſwered, diſcovering, whether this Practice, and Opinion of the Haimapeſthites be a ſin or not.

BUt the laſt Κρησφύγετον, under which our Opponents endeavour to ſhroude themſelves with ſome ſhadowy hopes of vain confidence, that the ſame ſhall vindicate them in this their erroneous practiſe and opinion, is: that they are ſure, that they ſin not in their abſtinence from theſe meats: which they may perhaps the more confidently, & peremptorily conclude, ſeeing by what is here before delivered, and by us confeſſed (as they happily may pretend) that none ought to eat againſt conſcience, as ſeemeth to appeare from Chapter 11. of this Treatiſe, from *Rom.* 14. *ch.* eſpecially v. 20. *For meats deſtroy not the work of God: All things indeed are pure but it is evill for that man who eateth with offence.* and *v.* 23. *And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, becauſe he eateth not of Faith, for whatſrever is not of Faith is ſin,* and therefore it is farr ſafer to abſtaine.

Anſ. But leaſt the *Ignis fatuus* of an erroneous fancy ſhould miſlead them as fare from the

the true intention and right Apprehention of that chapter and theſe Texts laſt cited, as from the right underſtanding of the Text in hand in *Act.* 15. whereby they may happily or rather unhappily become obdurate in their errour, promiſing themſelves immunity from any Guilt in their perſeverance therein, I have therefore thought it very neceſſary in the cloſe of this Tract to anſwer this objection: that if poſſible I may leave no means unatempted to reconcile us in this our diſſenting opinion.

That I may therefore make the more ſcrutinous diſquiſition, and perſpicuous demonſtration whether there be any offence, or not in this their practice it is to be conſidered. 1. Who they were, and what their ſtate and condition was to whom the Apoſtles addreſſed themſelves in that Prohibition. 2. Whether the condition of ſuch as now adayes abſtaine from theſe meats be directly the ſame with thoſe primitive Chriſtians: which if it were directly ſo, then were they ſo farre from ſinning by abſtaining, that 'tis doubt they might ſin by eating: but upon due conſideration we ſhall finde their condition far different.

As for thoſe Chriſtians at Antioch, they lived in the very infancy of the Goſpell, when Chriſtianity

Christianity (if we may so say) was but even in its very Embryon, and so were very lately converted to the knowledge of Christ & the Gospell, wanted the bookes of the new Testament to direct and instruct them in the Abolition of all such Ceremoniall Observations, as the Abstinence from meats, and the like: and therefore must needs be weak in faith, and Babes in knowledge, ignorant must they needs be of their freedome from the Ceremoniall Law and from this abstinence from blood being a part thereof, and therefore having this Condescention made unto them only *pro tempore*, till they had attained unto a a greater measure of Faith and knowledge they could not sin by this their Abstinence.

Now had such as in this age scruple at these meats, lived in those primitive dayes, whilst that weakness in knowledge for want of Scriptures to direct them occasioned that Condescention, and whilst that temporary command was unknown to be repealed; then without all doubt they ought to have abstained without sinning at all by that their Abstinence, yea might have sinned by eating against their Conscience: but now the case is farre otherwise.

Yet if we finde any in these days expressing themselves such Babes in Religion that they have

have need that one teach them again, which be the first Principles of the Oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milke, and not of strong meat. *Heb.* 5. 12. as is said before: that is, are so weake in Faith and Knowledge of their freedome from the Ceremoniall Law, and of their liberty to eat these meats, that through ignorance onely they abstaine from the same, I conceive it necessary, that they eat not, neither will I say that they sin by that their Abstinence, provided I say, that it be onely through ignorance, and weakneſſe, as afore: *For he that doubteth is damned if he eat, Rom.* 14. 23.

But how it should be weakneſs and not willfullneſs, I see not for Christians to embrace this errour, who live in the cleer light of the Gospell for many hundred yeares since that weakneſſe was in the Church at Antioch, and have all the Books of the New Testament to Instruct them: where they may find, That every Creature of God is Good, and nothing to be refused 1 *Tim.* 4. 4. That all things are lawfull, *Even Meats for the belly and the Belly for meats,* 1 *Cor.* 6. 12, 13. *That there is nothing uncleane of it selfe, --- but all things pure,* Rom. *ch.* 14. *v.* 14, 20. *That there is nothing from without a man that entring into him, can defile him, Mar.* 7.

15. where they may alſo finde that the Ceremoniall Law is aboliſhed *Epheſ.* 2. 15. *Col.* 2. 14. yea this very part thereof, which ſtood in meats and drinkes &c. *Heb.* 9. 10. *Col.* 2. 16, 17, 20, 21, 22. yea where they may alſo finde this very command in *Act.* 15. 20, 29. touching Idolothytes, and ſo of the reſt repealed, not onely by the Scriptures here before cited, ſhewing all things lawfu'l and pure, and nothing uncleane, no meats defiling: but alſo from 1 *Cor.* 8. 4, 7, 8, 9. and 1 *Cor.* 10. 25, 27, 29.

That Chriſtians therefore, I ſay, notwithſtanding all this, ſhould againſt the light of Gods Word, and ſo againſt their Knowledge and againſt their Conſcience go about obſtinately, and willfully to maintaine, and introduce into the Church an opinion, and practice of abſtaining from meats, & ſo to Judaiſe under the Goſpell. and to ſet up againe the Ceremoniall Law this ſixteen hundred yeares ago aboliſhed, it muſt needs be a ſin, yea more then a ſin of ignorance; for few ſure are ſo ignorant, however after information given them either from this Treatiſe, or otherwiſe, what can it be leſs than willfully and preſumptuouſly to ſinne againſt God.

So that whatever theſe Opinioniſts may pretend or affirme, that they are ſure they ſinne

ſinne not in their Abſtinence: yet nothing can be more ſure, than that they ſinne by endeavouring to introduce an erroneous practiſe, and opinion into the Church; eſpecially if they ſhall offer to ſtand in it, and to maintaine it.

1. Therefore (all theſe things being duely conſidered) they commit a ſinne of Ignorance in embracing, and holding an errour, and do not underſtand it.

2. They will undoubtedly commit a ſin of preſumption if after they underſtand it, they ſhall notwithſtanding obſtinately perſiſt in it, & endeavour wilfully to maintain it.

3. They ſinne in contradicting, and oppoſing the word of God which ſo fully and clearly declareth all meats lawfull, as is before proved.

4. If men may wreſt the Scripture to their own deſtruction as appeareth 2 *Pet.* 3. 16. they cannot but ſinn thereby: how then can theſe exempt themſelves from the guilt of ſin, who wreſt the true ſence of this Scripture in *Act.* 15. and by this their practiſe and opinion endeavour to pervert the meaning or intention of the holy Ghoſt in that place, to maintan their own vaine errour.

5. They ſin in offering to ſet up the Ceremoniall Law, which was ſo long ago abolished

abolished, seeing that although the Holy Ghost declareth the same to be abolished, as is before specified, they by their doctrine, and practice declare that it is not abolished: For if to maintaine Circumcision being one part of the Ceremoniall Law, be so heinous a sinnne that it depriveth a man of his interest in Christ as appeareth *Gal.* 5. 2, 3, 4. then to maintaine an abstinence from meats, which is also another part of the Ceremoniall Law, must needs be a sin.

6. If such as hold an opinion, that any thing which goeth into the mouth may defile a man, *are blind leaders of the blind, and shall fall into the ditch*, as appeareth *Mat.* 15. 11, 14. then it cannot be denyed, but that they must needs sin hereby: these therefore must needs sinne, that hold a defilement in these meats.

7. Lastly they sin because they go about to maintaine a doctrine which the Apostle calleth a doctrine of Divels as is before declared from the 1 *Tim.* 4. *ch.*

Thus we see, although these Opinionists may flatter themselves with a conceit that they sinne not by their abstinence from these meats) yet how dangerous it is willfully to maintaine this their practise and Opinion, and how hard a mater it is persisting herein,

to

to free themſelves from the guilt of ſinne. Yea ſo grand, ſo erroneous a crime hath the willfull abſtinence from meats been accounted, that even by a Popiſh Councell long agoe it was decreed, That all obſtinate refuſers being ſuſpected of Hereſie, ſhould be depoſed from the order of the Clergie. *Concil. Pap. Mart. in* 30. *diſtinct. cap. Siquis.*

The Concluſion.

TO conclude therefore, my Exhortation to all ſorts of Chriſtians is, as not to judge raſhly or fix upon any thing, eſpecially novell Opinions in Religion, before they have with mature deliberation Conſulted with the Word of God: ſo in this particular to get full ſatisfaction in their own mindes that they are freed from the Ceremoniall Law, with all its ſeverall Rites, and Obſervations by the death of Chriſt, and therefore that they go not about to revive or renew the ſame in any part thereof, which hath been ſo long agoe aboliſhed, as hath been evidently demonſtrated from *Col.* 2. *Eph.* 2. *Heb.* 9. *&c.* but that they endeavour after ſo much knowledge of their Chriſtian Liberty, as not

to

to imagine any ſinfullneſs in any meats whatſoever, which ſhould occaſion any abſtinence from the ſame; or that we can Worſhip God by eating or not eating meats: ſeeing it hath been ſo evidently before proved, and declared, that that Command in *Act.* 15. 28, 29. to abſtaine from meats offered to Idols, things ſtrangled and blood, was not for any impurity in thoſe meats, or ſinfulneſs ſimply in the eating thereof, but for the weakneſs of thoſe late Chriſtian Converts at Antioch; and that the Intentions of the Apoſtles in that portion of Scripture was onely to favour or concede, or condeſcend *pro tempore* unto their weakneſs in theſe indifferent things, according to their example, & Command in other Scriptures in the like kind, to preſerve unity and Concord in the Churches, and to draw them by degrees from theſe obſervations, leaſt they ſhould take offence, or their weak Conſciences ſhould by eating be defiled, and not in the leaſt meaſure to order or ſettle any ſtanding Ordinance to continue, and to be obſerved in the Chriſtian Church, as a binding precept to all Chriſtians: ſhall any therefore be ſo ſuperſtitions in their devotion, ſo unſettled in Religion, ſo erroneous in opinion as to dote after Judaiſme in times of Chriſtianity.

Let

Let us rather embrace the Apoſtles exhortation *Heb.* 13. 9. *Be not carryed about with diverſe and ſtrange doctrines:* For it is good that the heart be eſtabliſhed with Grace, not with meats, which have not profited them, that have been occupied therein. *Theophilact. in loc.*

Δόξα ἄνευ καλοχῆς πάντα διδόντι Θεῷ.

FINIS.